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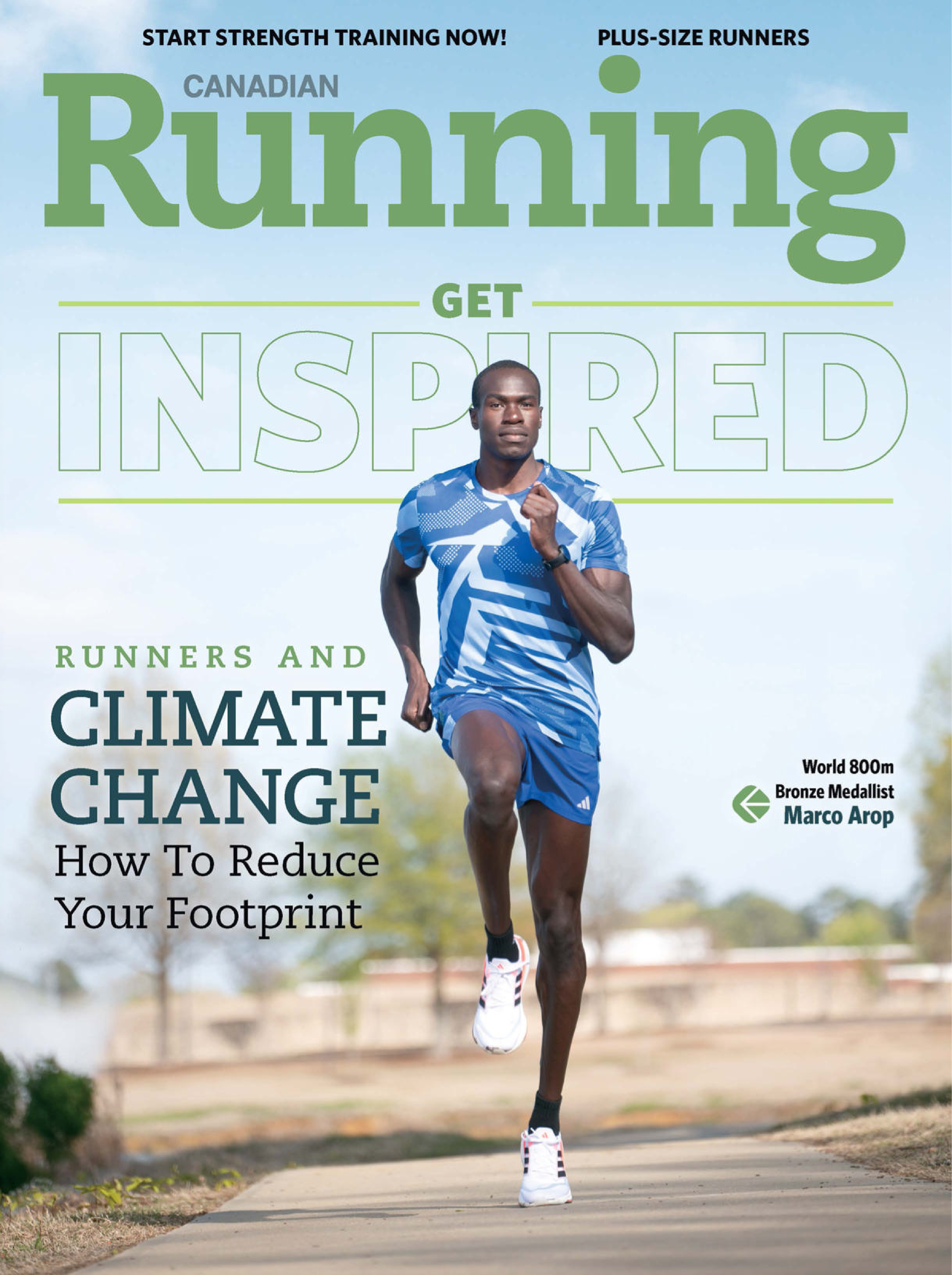

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FEATURES

Marco Arop: Built for Speed

28 As the athletics world prepares for its second world championships in as many years (this year they're in Budapest), our writer checked in with Marco Arop, bronze medallist and one of Canada's best hopes for another medal on the track. During quiet moments, Arop enjoys playing piano and guitar; he finds music to be a relaxing a hobby that provides a break from training to race two laps on the track.

By Paul Gains

Running on Faith

34 It may seem like runners are a particularly religious group. But it may be a coincidence. Running and religion have a lot in common—the commitment to something bigger than oneself and to one's community. Some runners would even say that running is their religion. Whatever your feelings about religion, there's no disputing that running can inspire faith and dedication like few other things.

By Madeleine Kelly

Warming Up

40 Signs of the climate emergency are everywhere, and runners are hardly immune; extreme weather is affecting races all over the world. What is runners' responsibility in the face of climate change? There's plenty they can do, and every little bit helps.

By Andrew McKay

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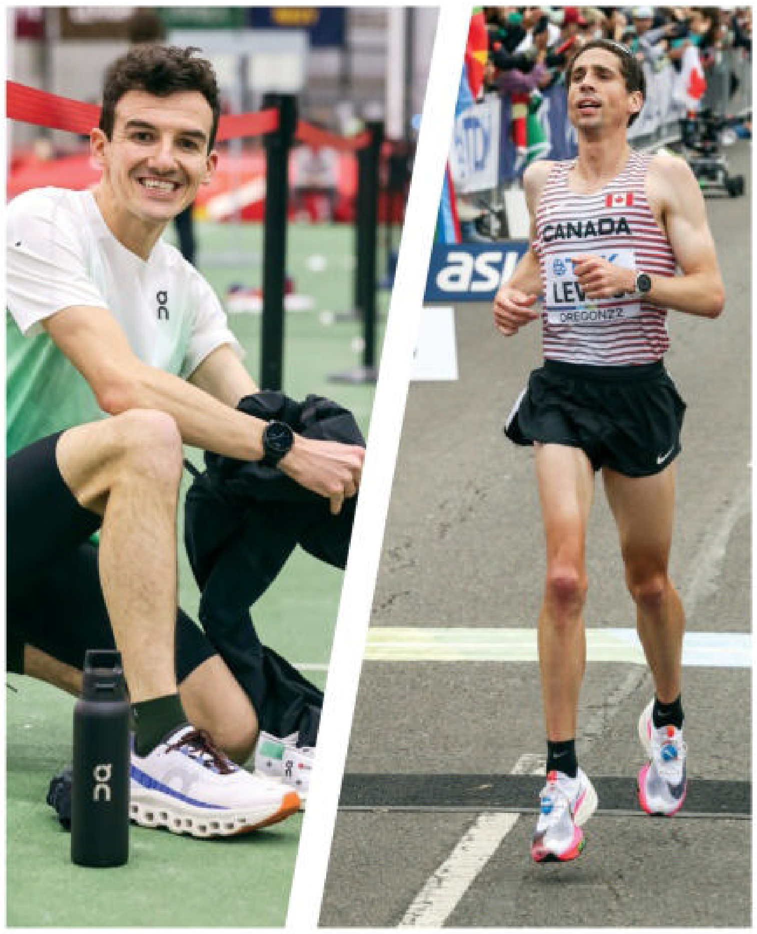
Matt Stetson, Courtesy Start2Finish, Matt Stetson



ABOVE Ben Flanagan

ABOVE Cam Levins

Keeping Pace

Things move fast in the running world, and it can be tough to keep up. Our March & April 2023 issue featured a profile of Ben Flanagan, who broke the Canadian record at the Valencia Half Marathon in Spain last October with his 61-minute performance. Canadian marathon record holder Cam Levins was also in that race, hard on Flanagan's heels, and before the ink was dry on the magazine, Levins had bested Flanagan's record by 42 seconds at the Vancouver First Half. (Then, on March 5, Levins also broke his own Canadian marathon record, running 2:05:36 at the Tokyo Marathon.)

This is a risk we take in the print world, writing about achievements that may well be surpassed before we can tell the bigger story. But it's a risk we'll continue to take, because Flanagan's rise is still inspiring and worthy of a few more words than we usually publish on the website. And it's not like it's over—I expect we'll be writing about him for a few more years yet.

Spring is a time of rejuvenation, and we hope this issue inspires you to ever-more-satisfying running and racing, whatever your goals. Many races have bounced back from the pandemic, but many are continuing the long grind to pre-pandemic participation levels, so we encourage you to sign up for a race this spring, or to volunteer. (Races can always use bodies: for setup and tear-down, course marking, marshalling and water stations.)

Our *Canadian Running* staff are a talented and varied group of people, and starting with our next issue, we plan to introduce ourselves to you in this space, one staff member at a time. Stay tuned!

Anne Francis, Editor
@CanadianRunning

ON THE COVER

MARCO AROP, 24, of Edmonton, won the bronze medal in the 800m at the 2022 World Athletics Championships in Eugene, Ore., and hopes to match or better that performance at this year's world championships in Budapest. He lives and trains in Starkville, Miss. For more, see p.28.

PHOTO Austin Frayser

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Kevin Morris

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RUN IN FOCUS

The 2022 Vigars & Salter Western Invitational cross country meet at Thames Valley Golf Course in London, Ont.

PHOTO GEOFF ROBINS/MUNDO SPORT IMAGES

RUN IN FOCUS

Running in the Larch Valley, Banff National Park

PHOTO TIM BANFIELD

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Better known for the rubber-toed Newport athletic sandal, Keen may have hit on a way to finally make walking fun. The brand has a revolutionary new walking shoe, the WK400, that may well inspire runners to slow down and incorporate more walking into their training—an excellent way to build a solid aerobic base and a great way to get around.

If you've worn running shoes with a rocker design, you'll appreciate that a rolling gait smoothes out heel-to-toe transitions and makes the whole exercise more efficient—and the same concept applies to walking. And if, like us, you're accustomed to walking primarily in old, worn-out running shoes, you'll want to try the WK400 to experience walking in a whole new way.

The shoe has some of the same elements as the most successful running shoes, including a nylon midsole plate, which provides springiness in combination with the responsive EVA midsole and the shoe's rocker design. (Its relatively high heel/toe offset prevents you from rolling back onto your heels.) And the high-traction outsole will grip any surface reliably, to keep you upright at all times—an unbeatable combination for enjoyable walking (that even counts as training). R

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THE WARMUP

LEFT Cam Levins about to cross the finish line at the 2023 Tokyo Marathon

Multiple world record holder collapses near finish at World Cross Country Championships

In one of the most bizarre race finishes ever, on Feb. 18, Letesenbet Gidey of Ethiopia was leading the women's race at the World Cross Country Championships in Bathurst, Australia, when she was overtaken by world 5,000m silver medallist and 2019 U20 world XC champion Beatrice Chebet of Kenya, only 30 m from the finish line—at which point Gidey grimaced and fell to the ground, apparently injured or exhausted. Officials from her team rushed onto the field, pulling her to her feet and encouraging her to continue, which led to her disqualification, even though she crossed the line in fourth place. Ethiopia's Tsigie Gebreselama finished second and Kenya's Agnes Jebet Ngetich took third. Gidey holds the world records for 5,000m, 10,000m and the half-marathon.

The men's race was won by world 5K record holder Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda, with Ethiopia's Berihu Aregawi second and world 5,000m and 10,000m record holder Joshua Cheptegei of Uganda third.

Cam Levins breaks North American marathon record at Tokyo Marathon

On March 5, Cameron Levins became the fastest marathoner in North American history, running 2:05:36 for fifth place at the Tokyo Marathon—a minute and a half faster than his previous Canadian record and two seconds faster than the North American record held since 2002 by Khalid Khannouchi. (Ryan Hall ran 2:04:58 at the 2011 Boston Marathon—a net downhill, and therefore non-record-eligible, course.)

Levins ran with the lead pack, challenging for the win until the final few hundred metres, when Ethiopia's Deso Gelmisa sprinted to victory; the first five men crossed the line within 14 seconds of each other.

A month earlier, Levins lowered the Canadian record in the half-marathon, running 60:18 for the win at Vancouver's First Half.

Femke Bol of the Netherlands breaks longest-standing track world record

On Feb. 19, Dutch superstar Femke Bol, 22, broke the longest-standing world record in track, with her 49.26-second sprint over 400m at the Dutch indoor championships in Apeldoorn, Netherlands. The previous record of 49.59 was set in 1982 by Jarmila Kratochvílová of Czechoslovakia. Bol split 24 seconds at the 200m mark and closed in 25.26 seconds to shatter the previous record by three-tenths of a second—a significant mark for 400m.

Bol had been inching toward the record this season, clocking a 49.96 at a meet in France a week earlier. She has won five major championship medals, including two silvers (in the 400m hurdles and 4x400m mixed relay) at the 2022 World Athletics Championships.

The outdoor 400m world record is 47.60, set by Marita Koch of East Germany in 1985. Only three women in the last 15 years have broken 49 seconds for 400m outdoors: back-to-back Olympic champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas, two-time silver medallist Marileidy Paulino of Spain and Salwa Eid Naser of Bahrain, who is currently serving a two-year doping suspension. Bol's personal best outdoors is 49.44.

Atlantic University Sport Track & Field Championships

At the 2023 Atlantic University Sport (AUS) Track & Field Championships in Saint John, N.B., in late February, the Dalhousie University women's track and field team won an impressive 33rd consecutive conference title, setting a U Sports record across all Canadian university sports.

The last time the Dalhousie women's track and field team did not win the AUS championship was 1989. The previous record was held by the University of Toronto men's swim team, which won 32 consecutive OUA titles between 1960 and 1992.

Team captain Hannah Trites credited the team's success to Dalhousie Tigers head coach Rich Lehman, who has been head coach for 11 years; he has won the AUS women's team coach of the year title eight years in a row. "It all comes down to our coaching staff and the support we receive from the university," said Trites. "The consistency and longevity that Coach Lehman and others have maintained are only a testament to our success."—*CR*

RUN CHAT

Thank you Kim Doerksen for the great Butternut Squash and Chorizo recipe (March & April 2023 issue). My wife and I prepared this for a cold, snowy Sunday supper in Calgary, and the meal was delicious. We love trying the recipes included in *Canadian Running*. Keep them coming.

Ron and Fran Freiburger,
Calgary

Tokyo Marathon Foundation, Kim Doerksen

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Start2Finish's Running & Reading Club

This program uses running to address the cycle of child poverty across Canada

By Brett Basbaum

As a Grade 4 student attending his first session of Start2Finish's Running & Reading Club in Guelph, Ont., in 2016, Allen Nolan had no awareness of the research showing that physical activity before learning improves reading results. He also didn't know that the character-building component of each session would help mold him into the young leader he is today. And he certainly wouldn't have guessed that his running would improve so much that one day he could be winning 5K races like the ones at the culmination of each Reading & Running session.

All Nolan knew at that first after-school session was that the running workout was really tough. But every time he felt like giving up, there were supportive coaches to encourage and motivate him—coaches like Anoke Dunston and Quinton Jacobs, runners and community leaders with direct experience of the power of running, and of organizations like Start2Finish, a not-for-profit that aims to break the cycle of child poverty in Canada.

The Running & Reading Club is the flagship program of Start2Finish. The program, which started almost 20 years ago and now serves students in more than 75 lower-income communities across the country, is evidence-based and focuses on the whole child, improving psychosocial skills, mental health, reading and physical

Courtesy Start2Finish

literacy. Kids sign up through their school.

"Through Start2Finish, I've been able to rediscover running through others," says Jacobs, who began as a volunteer coach and is now a program director, "and it has unlocked a whole new relationship with running for me, rooted in the sport's ability to bring people together and build community."

Running was chosen because of its accessibility—the barriers to participation are lower than for most other sports. Children in Grades 1 to 6 take part in weekly two-hour sessions that start with 45 minutes of vigorous physical activity and running, followed by a character-building activity, a healthy snack and 45 minutes of reading with volunteer coaches.

Dunston echoes Jacobs's point that, while running is often an individual sport, in the case of Start2Finish, it's running's ability to connect people that really makes the program successful. The kids clearly benefit from the structure of the sessions and the consistency of being active, but what's most notable is what he calls "transferable habits" that are built when the kids encourage each other to put in the effort. Each 32-week session culminates in a 5K Running & Reading Challenge event that brings regional clubs together, usually at a local university. The event includes a 5K race and a *Jeopardy*-style reading challenge.

Over the years, with each Challenge 5K, Nolan watched his race time and place improve. The first year that he ran the race and won, however, he was actually disappointed with himself. It was his Grade 7 year, and he had become a junior coach. Despite his win, he found himself regretting running solo instead of with one of the younger participants. As he retells this story, it quickly becomes clear that it is impossible to separate the running skills he has developed with the leadership skills he now demonstrates.

Now in Grade 11 and still volunteering with the program, Nolan reflects on how learning to follow a training plan for running is a skill that extends to many areas of his life: "I hope to continue being able to coach at this wonderful program for many years to come, because it helped me better understand how to reach my goals in life."

Brett Basbaum writes, reads and runs in the community of Dundas in Hamilton. Her favourite routes start on the Rail Trail and end at the coffee shop.

START2FINISH
5KM RUN & READING CHALLENGE
202
168
158
2022
Empower kids

Seafood Specials

These delicious fish and seafood recipes provide a nutritional bonanza

Kim Doerksen

By Kim Doerksen

In Canada's coastal cities, we are fortunate to have an abundance of fresh seafood available. Packed with nutritional goodness—including omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins, such as D and B2 (riboflavin)—fish is also rich in calcium and phosphorus and a great source of minerals, such as iron, zinc, iodine, magnesium and potassium. It's a great idea to consume fish once or twice a week.

Seafood can be an accessible and quick addition to any menu, provided that recipes, such as those below, use simple, fresh and minimal ingredients. The sweet and spicy flavours of the salmon are a complex addition to braised greens and rice; the cod is amplified with spices and a beautiful crisp from the pan fry; and shrimp is given a decadent boost as it's sautéed in garlic and butter—a quick meal after an evening jog. Plus they make excellent leftovers.

Dijon Salmon with Braised Greens

Ingredients

(serves two)

2 salmon fillets
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tsp brown sugar
Salt and pepper
12 oz. assorted seasonal greens (collard, Swiss chard, kale, etc.)
1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 large garlic clove, minced
1 cup chicken stock
1 tbsp white wine or sherry
¼ tsp hot red pepper flakes
1 cup white rice

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. Mix Dijon mustard and brown sugar to suit your taste—the ratio given is an even blend of sweet and spicy. Salt and pepper the salmon fillets.
3. Place the salmon skin-side down on a lightly oiled, foil-lined baking sheet or a well-oiled cast-iron skillet. Slather the tops of the fillets with the mustard and brown sugar glaze and slide them into the top half of the oven.
4. Roast for about 12 minutes.
5. While the salmon is roasting, wash the greens and remove the tough stems, then cut or break the greens into 5-cm lengths and prepare the rice as per the package directions.
6. Heat a non-stick pan over medium-high heat, add the oil and sauté the garlic for 30 seconds. Add the greens and sauté for one minute.
7. Stir in the stock, white wine/sherry and hot pepper flakes. Cover and cook for eight to 10 minutes, until greens are soft.
8. To serve, place rice, greens and salmon in a bowl. Top with fresh cherry tomatoes, if desired.

Simple Cod Gyros

Ingredients

For fish

1 ½ tsp dried oregano
1 tsp ground coriander
1 tsp ground cumin
½ tsp garlic powder (optional)
1 tsp lemon zest
Extra virgin olive oil
1.5-lb. cod fillet (or any white fish)
Salt and pepper to taste

For Mediterranean salad

6 Roma tomatoes, diced
1 large English cucumber, diced
½ cup fresh parsley leaves, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp lemon zest
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
2 tsp freshly squeezed lemon juice

For serving

1 lemon, cut into wedges
pita bread
tzatziki
pitted, marinated olives

Directions

1. In a small bowl, combine oregano, coriander, cumin, garlic powder and lemon zest to make the spice rub.
2. Pat fish dry with paper towel and season well on both sides with kosher salt and black pepper, then rub all over with the spice rub. Set aside.
3. Prepare the Mediterranean salad by combining all ingredients in a large bowl and toss to combine. Set aside.
4. Coat the bottom of a large cast iron skillet (or a non-stick skillet) with extra-virgin olive oil (approximately 1 tbsp). Warm the skillet over medium-high heat until the oil is just shimmering (but not smoking).
5. Add fish and grill for about three minutes per side (without moving it, which helps get the underside golden and crispy). The fish is ready when it turns opaque all the way through and flakes apart easily.
6. Serve fish hot. Add a splash of fresh lemon juice on top.
7. To assemble the gyros, use one pita wrap (or large lettuce leaf) per person. Add a bit of tzatziki sauce over the pita, add the grilled fish, then the Mediterranean salad and olives. Wrap or fold pita and enjoy.

Shrimp Scampi with Fettuccine

Ingredients

2 tbsp butter
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
4 garlic cloves, minced
½ cup dry white wine or broth
⅛ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes, or to taste
Salt and black pepper, to taste
1 ¾ lb. large shrimp, shelled
⅓ cup chopped parsley
½ lemon
1 package fettuccine

Directions

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and cook pasta as per package instructions.
2. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, melt butter with olive oil. Add garlic and sauté until fragrant, about one minute. Add wine or broth, salt, red pepper flakes and plenty of black pepper and bring to a simmer. Let wine reduce by half, about two minutes.
3. Add shrimp and sauté until they just turn pink, two to four minutes, depending on their size. Stir in the parsley and lemon juice and serve over pasta. R

Kim Doerksen is Canadian Running*'s food writer, a coach with @mile2marathon and an elite runner in Vancouver.*

Antioxidants

What runners need to know

By Megan Kuikman

While running offers a multitude of health benefits, such as building strong bones and improving cardiovascular fitness, it also results in the production of free radicals, which are unstable and highly reactive molecules that steal electrons from healthy cells in an effort to become stable, and in the process, cause cell damage. If there is a disturbance in the balance of free radicals and the body's defence mechanism against them, oxidative stress can result, which may lead to an inflammatory response and is linked to cardiovascular disease and cancer.

This is where antioxidants come in. Antioxidants defend against oxidative stress by neutralizing free radicals. They may be endogenous (occurring naturally in the body) or exogenous (from food, drinks and supplements). Examples of antioxidants include vitamin E, vitamin C, selenium, carotenoids and flavonoids. No single antioxidant is more important than another, as they work together to defend against oxidative stress. Likewise, there is no single food or beverage with the perfect amount of antioxidants. Some examples of antioxidant rich foods include:

- **FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:** kale, artichokes, strawberries, blackberries
- **NUTS:** walnuts, pecans, sunflower seeds
- **HERBS AND SPICES:** cloves, cinnamon, all spice, oregano, thyme, rosemary
- **OTHER:** Items such as green and black tea, coffee, red wine, dark chocolate

Given that exercise increases the production of free radicals, it would make sense that runners would have increased antioxidant requirements. As a result, antioxidant supplements are often promoted for runners, to reduce muscle damage and improve performance. However, runners may want to hold off before taking an antioxidant supplement. Here's why:

Runners may not have increased antioxidant needs

Despite the increased free radical production that comes with exercise, runners may not have increased antioxidant needs, because regular running increases the body's endogenous antioxidant systems. This means that, with regular running, our body is better able to deal with the free radical production from exercise.

Antioxidant supplementation may decrease performance and harm health

The free radicals produced from exercise may lead to muscular adaptations that, with time, lead to improved performance. As a result, taking an antioxidant supplement may blunt the training adaptations. Beyond the impact on performance, even more concerning is the effect of high doses of antioxidants on health outcomes. For instance, there is a link between high doses of beta-carotene (an antioxidant) and the risk of lung cancer.

Antioxidant supplements are not the same as antioxidant-rich foods

Whole foods contain natural antioxidants in natural ratios and proportions that can't be replicated in pill form. For instance, there are eight different forms of vitamin E found in food, yet, most vitamin E supplements will include only one of these forms. There may also be other health-promoting substances in foods that won't be present in a supplement.

The bottom line: athletes should aim to consume an antioxidant-rich diet, rather than taking an antioxidant supplement. Taking high doses of an antioxidant through supplemental form may be detrimental, rather than beneficial, to performance and health, by blunting training adaptations. While antioxidants defend against the free radicals produced from running when it comes to dietary antioxidants, there can certainly be too much of a good thing. R

Megan Kuikman is an avid runner and registered dietitian with a passion for sports nutrition. She is currently completing her PhD with an aim to address gender gaps in exercise science research. She can be reached at hello@megankuikmanRD.ca.

Body Work

BELOW Maria Bernard-Galea at the 2022 Athletics Canada Cross Country

Brian Rouble/Mundo Sport Images

Level Up Your 5K

This combo of miles and 300 m repeats will benefit both your leg turnover and your speed endurance

By Maria Bernard-Galea

This is a great transitional workout between seasons (cross country, indoor/outdoor track), because it's challenging but does not let you fixate on splits as much as some other interval workouts, and it's a staple for me and my teammates when we are training for middle/long-distance races. After training for a marathon or half-marathon, it's a nice way to incorporate some more intense speedwork on the track; coming off a break, it's a great introduction to building a base with controlled miles (rather than hammering them!).

Last summer, I decided to enter the 5,000m at the Canadian Track and Field Championships. It was a classic sit-and-kick race, where we closed in a 2:55 final kilometre off a much slower pace. This workout helped me gain the strength and practise the speed needed to run the 5,000m, and I finished second—by only 0.15 of a second!

The workout can be done on the track or road. We usually do a hybrid, with the miles as a loop outside of the track, ending on or beside it, and the 300s on the track. The point is to focus on the 300s, and your turnover.

The 300s should be hard and very quick (think 1,500m pace). When training for a 5K, it is a good idea to remind the legs that they can go fast sometimes. This is a nice way to change things up a bit, by focusing on some shorter, intense bouts among the miles, which will still benefit your strength. I like to think of it as being a half-marathoner and then a 1,500m runner all in one workout. The miles are meant to be "cruisy"—think tempo effort, similar to half-marathon pace—in control, but really by feel. (Sometimes I don't even look at my watch for these.)

This workout adds up, so it is very important not to run the miles all-out. During the rest, we often walk, especially between the 300s, as one minute is almost the exact time it takes to walk back from the finish line to the 1,500m start.

The Workout

» Activation exercises, 15 minute warmup jog, running drills and strides.

» Four sets of (1 x cruise mile/90 seconds' rest/3 x 300 m with 60 seconds' rest), with 2 minutes' rest between sets (total 10 km).

» 10–15 minute cooldown jog.

Modifications

To reduce this workout, we sometimes do three sets, which equals 8.5 km, or you can cut out a 300 m per set as well, and do 2 x 300 m instead, and only three sets, equalling a total of 6.6 km.

Timed version

Four sets of (1 x 5 minute/90 seconds' rest/3 x 1 minute with 60 seconds' rest), with 2 minutes' rest between sets.

Workout tips

» Embrace the "bleh." You will start to feel the 300s in your legs when you go to start the miles, and that is totally OK (and by design).

» Take one section at a time. Don't get overwhelmed thinking about the other sections of the workout, just focus on the part you are on.

» Share the load. This can be a really fun workout to do with a friend, especially if you have different strengths. Maybe one of you can lead the 300s and the other can lead the miles.

» Go to the arms. On the final sets of 300s, remember to drive your arms and use them when your legs are starting to tire. When your arms go, your legs will, too. R

Maria Bernard-Galea is a 14-time national team member, competing for Canada in the 3,000m steeplechase at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and at the 2017 and 2019 World Athletics Championships. She is a registered audiologist in Calgary, Alta.

Building Resilient Hamstrings

Bringing back-of-leg to front-of-mind

By Jon-Erik Kawamoto

Hamstring strains can be a pain in the… hamstrings. Commonly seen when you're running at faster paces, hamstring strains or tears often occur at the end of the swing phase of the gait cycle, when bringing your leg forward from behind you. During this phase, the hamstring muscle group lengthens to slow down the forward-swinging leg, then shortens quickly to propel the body forward as soon as the foot hits the ground. This quick transition from a lengthening contraction to a shortening contraction is when the muscle group is believed to be most susceptible to injury. Once injured, you'll feel tenderness at the injury site, where the muscle meets the tendon.

Unfortunately, hamstring strains have a high rate of recurrence, possibly due to the injured hamstring healing with less flexibility or poor functional co-ordination. Therefore, hamstring flexibility and functional strength training are paramount for recovering and preventing future strains. For more acute strains, seek help from a professional physiotherapist or massage therapist; if you're able to move with almost a full range of motion pain-free, these strengthening exercises are for you.

THE EXERCISES

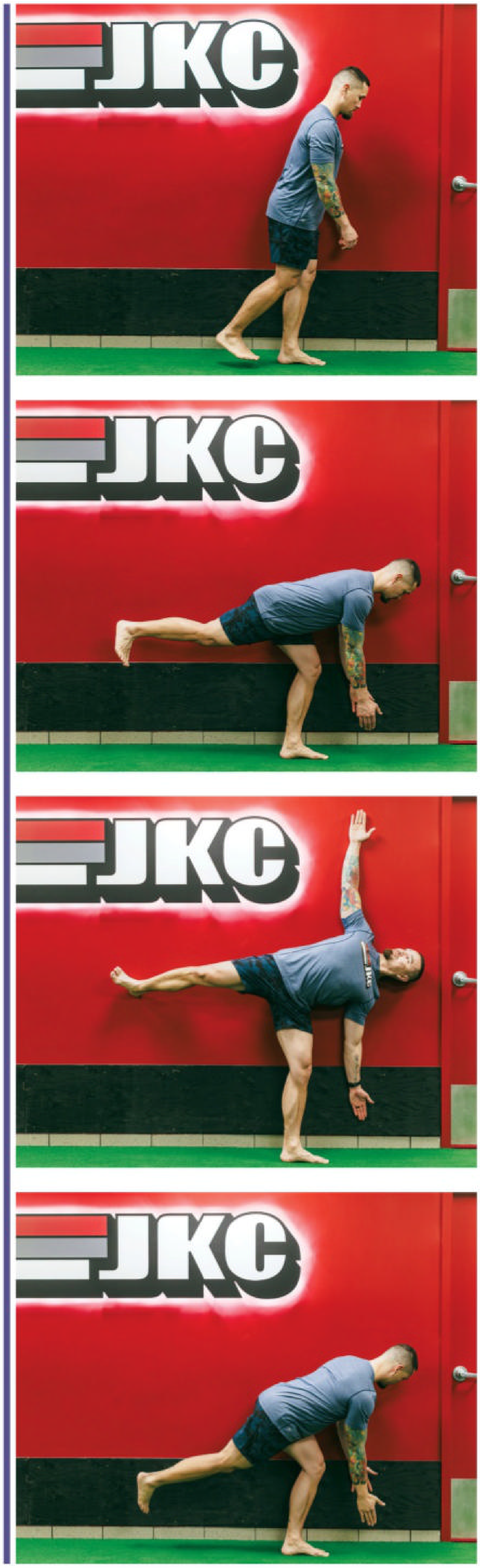
Do this workout twice weekly in your bare feet, preferably after a short warmup run.

1 Hip Airplane on Wall

WHY To improve hamstring flexibility and hip mobility

HOW Stand on your left leg, roughly six inches (15 cm) from a wall. Soften your left knee and lift your right leg behind you as you bow forward at your hips. Try to form the shape of a sideways capital F, with your shoulders and hips square with the floor and your arms extended toward the floor. Next, brace your abs to lock your ribs to your hips, then rotate your right arm and right hip up toward the wall. Try to place your right arm and right glute on the wall. Hold this position for five seconds. Next, rotate back to the starting position, but continue to drop your right hip below the level of your left hip. Hold this position for five seconds.

DO 8–10 repetitions per leg



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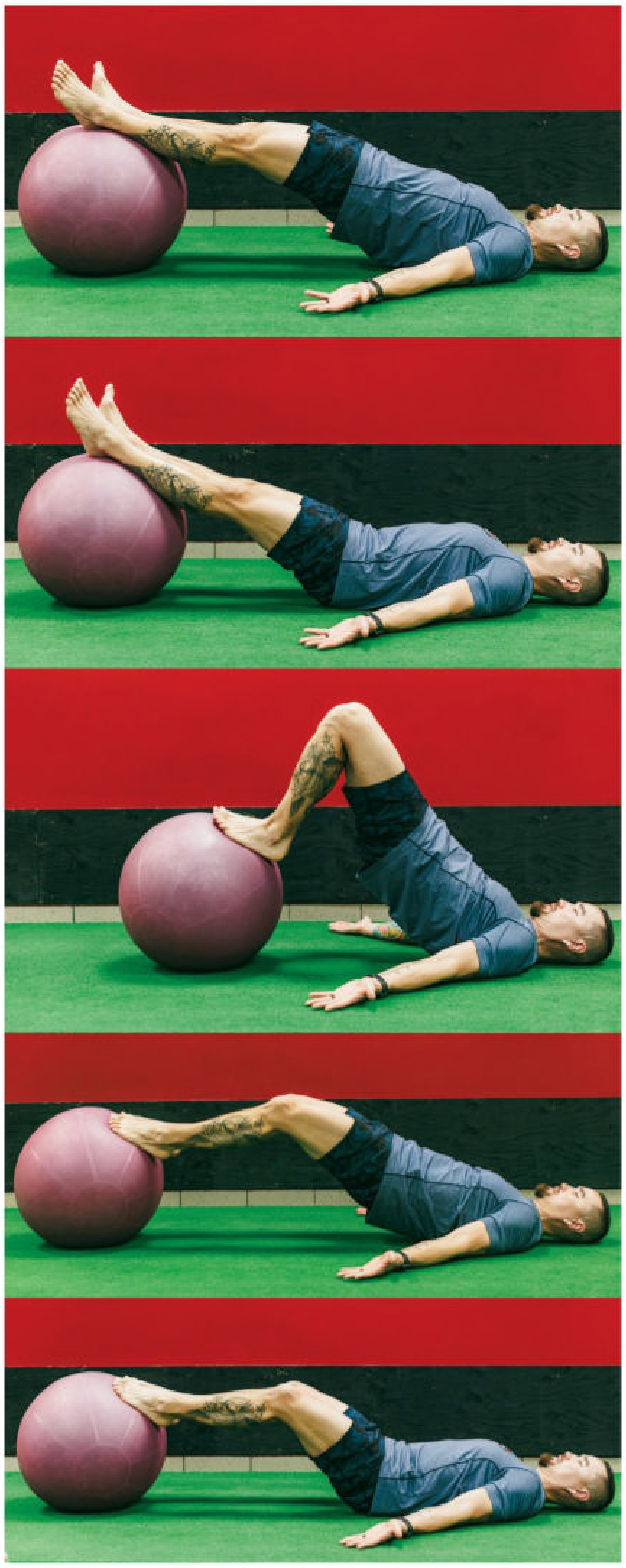


2 Hamstring Exercise Ball Circuit

WHY To improve hamstring strength and muscle co-ordination with calves and gluteals

HOW Lie on your back with an exercise ball under your heels and your arms on the floor with your palms up. Tilt your pelvis, then lift your hips in the air, forming a straight-leg bridge. Form a straight line from your ankles to your shoulders. Squeeze your hamstrings and glutes. Raise and lower your hips 10 times. On the last rep, stay up, then roll the ball toward your hips as you lift your hips higher. Form a bent-knee bridge by squeezing your glutes and hamstrings and forming a straight line from your knees to your shoulders. Curl the ball in and out 10 times. Finally, point your toes away from you and place the ball beneath your forefeet. Soften your knees slightly, pelvic tilt and raise your hips off the floor to form a toe-point soft-knee bridge. Squeeze your calves, hamstrings and glutes at the top of this bridge and do 10 lifts.

DO 2 sets of 10 lifts for each bridge, consecutively

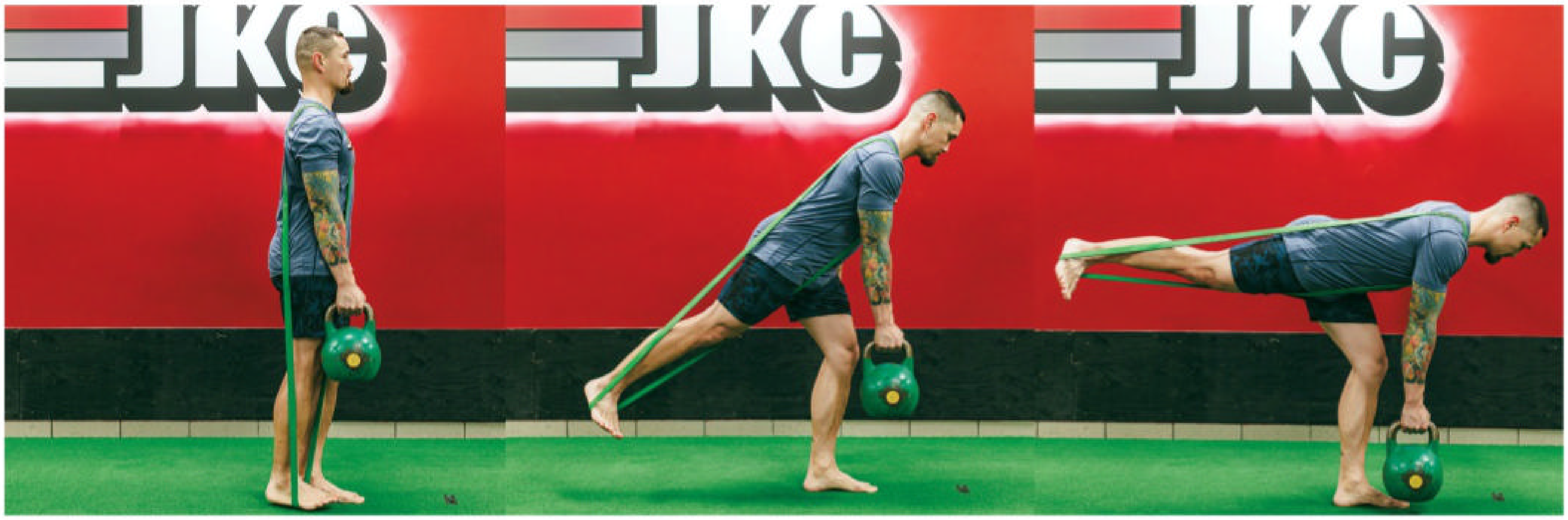
3 Single-Leg Romanian Deadlift with Off-Set Weight and Band

WHY To improve hamstring and glute strength, along with core stability

HOW Place a circular resistance band around your right shoulder and the bottom of your right foot. Stand on your left foot with a weight in your right hand. Lock your ribs to your hips by bracing your abs, soften your left knee and lift your right foot off the floor. Next, bow forward at your left hip while lifting your right leg behind you. Keep the resistance band taught by keeping your right shoulder in line with your right ankle. Try to form a 90-degree angle at your left hip while keeping your ribs and hips locked together. Notice how "good" tension develops in your left hamstring. Return to the starting position.

DO 12–15 repetitions per leg

Jon-Erik Kawamoto, MSc, CK, CSCS, is a certified kinesiologist, strength and conditioning coach, a regular contributor to Canadian Running *and co-owner of JKC, a small group personal training company in St. John's, N.L. Find out more at* jkconditioning.com.



ALEX HUTCHINSON ROUNDS UP THE LATEST IN ENDURANCE RESEARCH

Rethinking Recovery

When "recovery" involves stuff you're not motivated to do, is it really recovery?

A few years ago, researchers at the University of Poitiers in France surveyed the scientific literature on post-exercise recovery. Ice baths, cryosaunas, massage, stretching, compression garments, nutritional supplements—the list of recovery aids that purport to soothe aching muscles and restore vigour after an exhausting workout is very, very long, and the researchers identified more than a thousand scientific articles evaluating their efficacy.

We all want to know what works and what doesn't. Scientists want to figure out how the body works. Coaches and medical staff want to know what to prescribe for their athletes. Journalists want to write exciting articles revealing the secrets of effective recovery. Entrepreneurs want to sell us stuff. The sports recovery market, according to industry analyst Matt Powell of NPD Group, is now worth hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

There's one group missing from that list, though: the athletes themselves. The burgeoning scientific literature on recovery, according to Stuart Wilson and Bradley Young of the University of Ottawa's School of Human Kinetics, "risks framing athletes as compliant machines to be tinkered with, largely devoid of agency." In a new study published in the journal *Sport, Exercise, and Performance Psychology*, Wilson and Young set out to discover what top endurance athletes think about recovery, and how they ensure they're getting enough. The answer, it turns out, has very little to do with the latest gadgets to hit the market.

Wilson and Young chose to focus on endurance athletes for a simple reason: fatigue is central to the experience of endurance training. They conducted a series of interviews with 13 Canadian runners, cyclists, swimmers, rowers, biathletes and other endurance stars, all of whom had competed in at least two Olympics or World Championships. Like the cliché about there being dozens of Inuit words for snow, the athletes described their fatigue with great nuance: the ache of tired muscles versus the burning of metabolic fatigue; dull post-long-run deadness versus the keyed-up jitters after an interval workout; and "zombie-like" cognitive fatigue versus moody emotional fatigue versus motivational fatigue that left them unable to get off the couch.

The athletes agreed that all these different forms of fatigue require recovery so they can train and eventually race well. "It doesn't matter if it's a relationship, or logistical, or training-derived," one cyclist told them. "Your body just interprets it as stress, it doesn't know what it is." That's not to say that the athletes tried to avoid stress or fatigue entirely. Being imperfectly recovered is necessary to stimulate training adaptations. You might want 10-out-of-10 recovery at the start line of the World Championships, another athlete said, but most of the time you're at six to 7.5, "and there are periods of the year where you want to be in the hole a little bit: if you feel like a four, that's OK."

What do we mean by "recovery"?

One of the big challenges in trying to study recovery tools like ice baths is defining what you mean by recovery. Is it how your muscles feel? Or how strong you are the next day? Or what level of inflammatory markers show up in your blood tests? The athletes were highly sensitive to how their bodies felt—in part, one pointed out, because the feeling of being fully recovered was so rare. When they were rested, movement felt easier in subtle and hard-to-pin-down ways. But they also noted differences in their feelings: more optimism, higher motivation, greater emotional depth. It's no wonder scientists have struggled to nail down the best recovery techniques: these are hard things to measure.

Perhaps the most notable pattern was how different each athlete's recovery routine was. There was no single recipe for success, no "one simple trick" to bounce back from hard workouts. And the athletes were very conscious of the mental effort required for some types of recovery. "When I'm mentally fatigued, it would make it worse to sit in the compression pants or foam roll, or add more active recovery techniques," one athlete told them, "because that just feels like more training." Instead, the athletes dialled in their focus on recovery during particularly heavy or important training blocks, but dialed out to a more relaxed approach whenever possible—going for walks outside, meeting friends and doing other things that kept them fresh and motivated in more holistic ways.

These sorts of amorphous "lifestyle choice" approaches are much harder to isolate and study in the lab, so they don't show up in recovery research. They're also hard to package and sell, which is why we're not bombarded by ads urging us to bake some muffins, or put our feet up and read a book, or get together with friends who don't know or care about our marathon training. But the athletes approached these sorts of activities thoughtfully and deliberately. It's not just about resting: surfing social media, one athlete noted, might be physically restful but mentally anxiety-provoking.

First, master sleep and refuelling

Wilson and Young's concept of "athlete-centred recovery" dovetails nicely with the perspective in science journalist and former elite cross-country skier Christie Aschwanden's 2019 book, *Good to Go: What the Athlete in All of Us Can Learn from the Strange Science of Recovery*. During her athletic career, Aschwanden recalls, recovery was a passive state—something that happened naturally between workouts. These days, it has morphed into something you do. Some of Wilson and Young's interviewees report feeling guilty that they're not better at performing the rituals of modern recovery, as if there's a medal for most fanatical foam-roller.

One thing some high-tech recovery aids like pneumatic compression boots have in common with old-school techniques like massage, Achwanden points out, is that they force you to slow down and sit (or lie) peacefully for a while. For those of use whose lives aren't devoted to the single-minded pursuit of Olympic glory, that's perhaps an even more important lesson. We've all got emails to catch up on and shopping to do and futures to plan—but learning to step out of that loop now and then and chill out, in whatever way resonates best with you, is probably the best thing you can do to prepare for tomorrow's run. "If you can't do sleep and nutrition well," an Olympic cyclist says, "I just don't see the point of starting to invest into like, whatever, getting compression pants or all that crap."

Alex Hutchinson is a Toronto journalist specializing in the science of running and other endurance sports, and the author of Endure: Mind, Body, and the Curiously Elastic Limits of Human Performance *(now in paperback).*

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Showing up is the most powerful thing you can do

By Chelsea Clarke

Lacing up to hit the road or trail for the first time can be intimidating for anyone. But for someone in a larger body, those feelings can be increased. Just ask Peterborough, Ont.-based runner Brendan Carpenter: “For someone who has been many different sizes, from 360 pounds to 190 pounds, to gaining weight over the pandemic and running a marathon at 230 pounds, I’ve been looked at weird both in the gym and at races.”

But should the benefits of running only be available to those in smaller bodies? Of course not. Everyone deserves to feel the rush of endorphins and boost in physical and mental health that running can offer. While tackling the issue of how society views different body types, we can begin to chip away at judgment around who running is for. Short answer: everyone.

Beyond esthetics

Ask any runner about the best part of running, and we’d bet that achieving a low body-fat percentage isn’t high on the list. “There’s no doubt that running has helped me build strength and increase cardiovascular health,” says Missouri-based plus-size triathlete Katie Zornes. “But more than anything, running helps me manage depression and anxiety. And there’s something powerful in realizing you did something you weren’t sure you could do.”

Carpenter’s perspective changed when he realized that each person’s path is unique. “Size does not determine health or ability,” he says. Size also doesn’t determine why a runner is out there. Most people run to better their health, train for a race or blow off steam (or all three).

Leaders of the Pack

Help change the narrative by following these inclusivity advocates:

@ProjectLoveRun
Celebrating diverse bodies and backgrounds, with a side of brunch.

@TheMirnavator
See the world through ultrarunner and Lululemon ambassador Mirna Valerio’s eyes.

@300PoundsAndRunning
Marathoner Martinus Evans wrote the book on inclusive running—literally (*Slow AF Run Club: The Ultimate Guide for Anyone Who Wants to Run*).

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Brendan Carpenter runs the 2022 New York City Marathon

MarathonFoto

Societal shortcomings

If most of the bodies we see in fitness media are smaller, it perpetuates the notion that they’re the only type that belongs. Being aware of biases can be a helpful step toward inclusion. And while facing overt bias is unpleasant and frustrating, Zornes recognizes the power she holds just by training and racing. “What I have control over is how I show up and what I bring to this space,” she says. “Visibility of all body types is key. I hope by sharing my story, other people in larger bodies can see themselves in it and realize their strength, and that they deserve to experience the benefits of a body in motion.”

Let’s celebrate!

For runners of all shapes and sizes, it’s easy to downplay your accomplishments—but acceptance for all might come in the form of celebration. “I’d love to never again hear a fellow runner minimize their accomplishments,” says Zornes, noting that she often hears statements like, “I ran five miles, but I was really slow.” For Zornes, celebrating triumphs that have nothing to do with speed, distance, or PBs helps create space for many different ways to win.

Carpenter has another suggestion for celebrating: acknowledging that during races, some participants may take longer to finish, but what matters is their willingness to show up. “They’ve paid the same as everyone else, and should be rewarded the same finish-line feelings,” he says. “It comes down to representation and cheering everyone on equally.” R

Chelsea Clarke is a Toronto-based health and fitness writer whose work has appeared in ICONFIT Magazine, STRONG Fitness Magazine, *and* Strategy.

How to Start Strength Training

Strength training is beneficial for runners of all skill levels (no gym required)

By Stirling Myles

It's well known that adding strength training to your weekly routine will improve your overall health, make you more injury-resistant and elevate your running performance. For these reasons alone, runners of all skill levels should dedicate some time to strength work as a part of their running program, focusing mainly on the quads, hamstrings, glutes and core. (Upper body work doesn't hurt either, but that can come later.)

Strength work can be confusing and intimidating to the uninitiated, so if you're new to "pumping iron," here are some tips to help you get started.

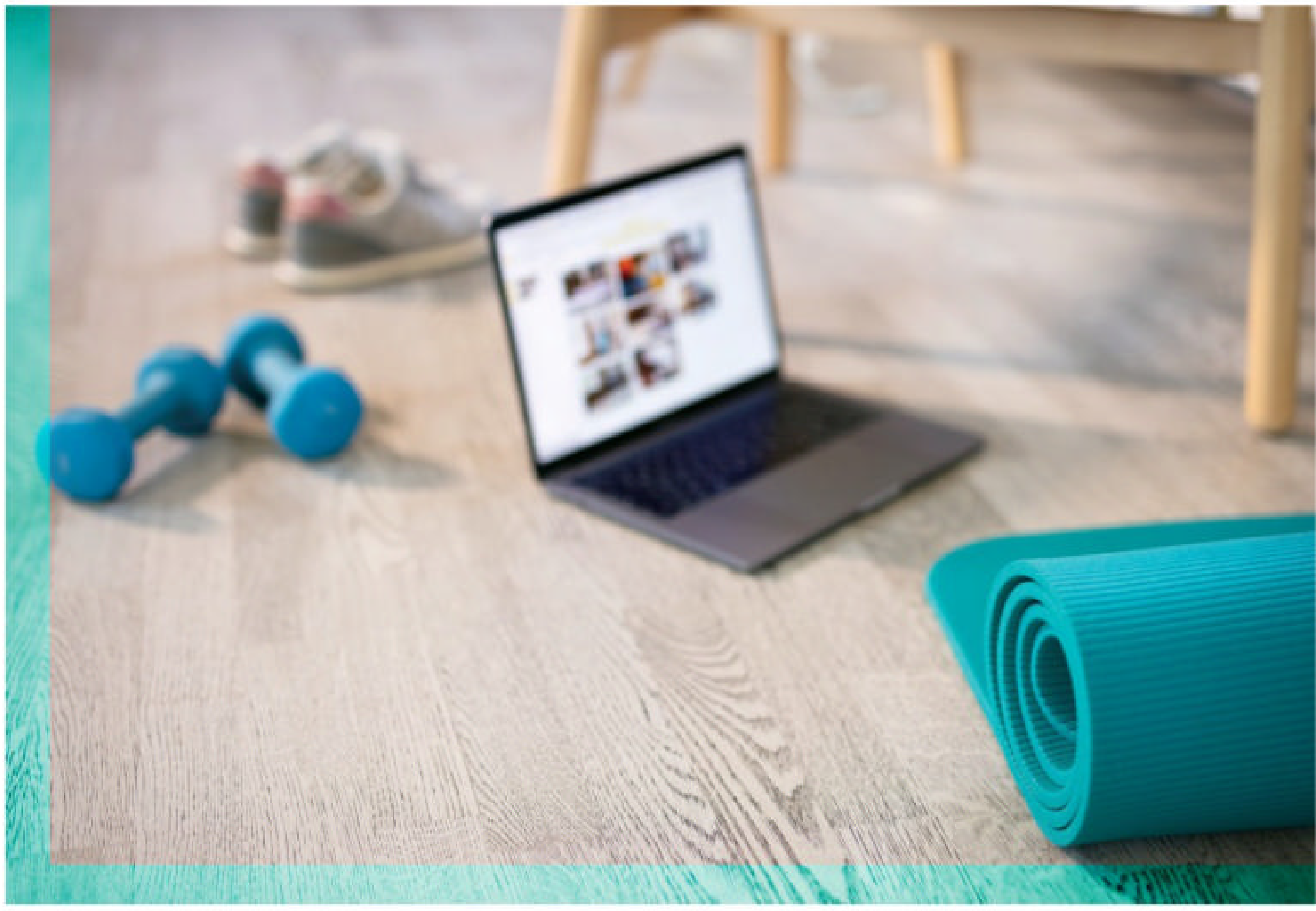
Add weight gradually

Once you've decided to include strength work in your training program, start by choosing a few simple exercises you can do in the comfort of your home after a run or speed workout (such as lunges, squats, deadlifts, planks and glute bridges), using only your body weight. Once you've mastered a a few basic exercises, you can add others, gradually increasing the length of your workouts and the weight you are lifting. (You don't need a gym membership to get started, but if you're new to strength training, hiring a personal trainer for a few sessions, either in your home or at a gym, is a great way to learn correct technique and form.)

Don't make the mistake of trying to lift heavy weights right away, which could lead to injury. If you've never strength trained before, your body weight is enough to get started, and will give you a chance to learn new movement patterns, with a low risk of injury. Once you're confident you can perform various exercises correctly with good form, you can begin to add weight.

When you've mastered some basic body weight exercises (i.e., after a few weeks), move up gradually by adding light (7-lb./3-kg) hand weights. Similarly, once it becomes easy to do the exercises with that much weight, you could move up to a single 20- or 25-lb. (9- to 12-kg) dumbbell, held in front of you with both hands. This represents a significant increase in weight, so go slow and steady and focus on good form. It will likely be a few weeks or months before you want to increase weight. As with any form of exercise, if you experience sudden pain, stop and go back down to a lower weight. (Resistance bands are another way to add "weight" and challenge your muscles.)

Note that pushups and planks are body weight exercises and will feel very challenging in the beginning; the way to make them more challenging is to do more repetitions (pushups) or hold them longer (planks).



Focus on consistency and good form

The great news is that you don't need to spend hours working out to reap the benefits of strength training. Studies have found that as little as 13 minutes a week is enough to see progress. Consistency is essential, so start with an amount you can fit into your weekly routine, and do it consistently. Start with a five- to seven-minute workout at the end of two of your weekly runs, and build from there. Within a few months, you should be up to 30 minutes or so, a couple of times a week. R

Stirling Myles writes about running, ultrarunning, music and mental health from his home in Gainesville, Fla., and is training for the Orcas Island SwimRun. He has a life goal of running a 100-mile race and is always available to share his love of tacos with anyone within earshot.

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Cumberland, B.C.

Vancouver Island's former coal mining town is a trail runner's paradise

Lorenz Jimenez

By Melissa Offner

One of the premier locations for trails on Vancouver Island, Cumberland is a former coal-mining village in the Comox Valley, just south of Courtenay, B.C. In recent years, it has become one of the most desirable communities on the island, thanks to its flourishing cultural scene and world-class recreation opportunities. It also boasts the unique Cumberland Community Forest (CCF)—just one of the many places for trail runners to explore.

Easy

Nymph Falls Nature Park Loop

At just under 5 km, this relatively flat loop follows the Puntledge River and takes you through the Nymph Falls Regional Nature Park forest. You'll see rapids and waterfalls that go over exposed bedrock ledges, and you'll run past Douglas fir, western hemlock and red cedar trees that were planted in this second-growth forest. There are a few rooty sections, but the trail is not overly technical. To complete the loop, start at the parking lot and follow Nymph Falls Trail before taking a right on Midline Trail, left on River Trail, left on Long Loop Trail and finally a right, back on Midline Trail. In summer, you can even slide into Barber's Hole for a post-run dip.

Easy to Moderate

Cumberland Potholes (or China Bowls) onto Davis Lake Main Trail

This unique and popular 4-km out-and-back trail is located in the CCF and starts a few metres from Cumberland's main street. You can use the Davis Lake Main trail, a gravel logging road, to access your destination or venture off on some of the connecting singletrack trails (but keep an eye out for mountain bikes). The Cumberland or Perseverance Creek Potholes, often referred to as the China Bowls, are bright blue pools of water created by erosion on sandstone. The pools are fed by small waterfalls as the creek flows through. Since you're in the CCF, you can easily prolong your outing by continuing on Davis Lake Main, for 16 km out-and-back, with more than 500 m of vert (or adventuring on any of the trails on the CCF's 545 hectares of preserved forest).

DESTINATION
CUMBERLAND
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Details

HOW TO GET THERE Cumberland, B.C. is 105 km northwest of Nanaimo, via Hwy. 19.
RECOMMENDED TRAILS Nymph Falls Nature Park Loop, Cumberland Potholes/China Bowls, Davis Lake Main, Mount Becher, Alone Mountain
LOCAL RACES CVRR Backyard Ultra 2023 on July 22 in Courtney (*cvrr.ca/events/cvrr-backyard-ultra-2023*); Mt. Washington 8K and 14K on Aug. 19 at Mount Washington Alpine Resort (*islandtrailseries.ca/races/comox-valley-mt-washington*); The Cumby 7.5K, 15K, 25K on May 6 at Cumberland Village Park (*thecumby.ca*).

Hard

Mount Becher

This trail can be done either as an out-and-back 11 km with about 700 m of elevation gain, or as a loop using the Boston Ridge Trail, totalling around 16 km (depending on your tracker) and 1 1,000 m of vertical ascent. Both trails start from Forbidden Plateau Road. The out-and-back uses the Forbidden Ski Hill Trail before hitting Mount Becher Trail, and the loop will take you up Boston Ridge Trail before descending on Mount Becher Trail. Don't be surprised if you have to do a little bushwhacking along the way and scrambling at the very top; the views of the Comox glacier and the Comox Valley are worth the extra work. This is a relatively well marked trail with little traffic.

Other notable options

Alone Mountain Trail

A 5-km out-and-back with close to 700 m of elevation gain.

Kwai Lake & Forbidden Plateau Loop

A 16-km loop that is accessed from Strathcona Provincial Park and the base of Mount Washington.

Buggered Pig, Teapot and Black Hole Loop

A 9-km loop with many intersecting trails in the CCF. R

Melissa Offner is a television and podcast host, the leader of the North Vancouver run crew RUNDISTRIKT and an avid runner.

Beneva Quebec City Marathon

Challenge yourself against the picturesque city's historic backdrop this fall

QC
FITLETIC
CEP

Mathieu Belanger

By Stirling Myles

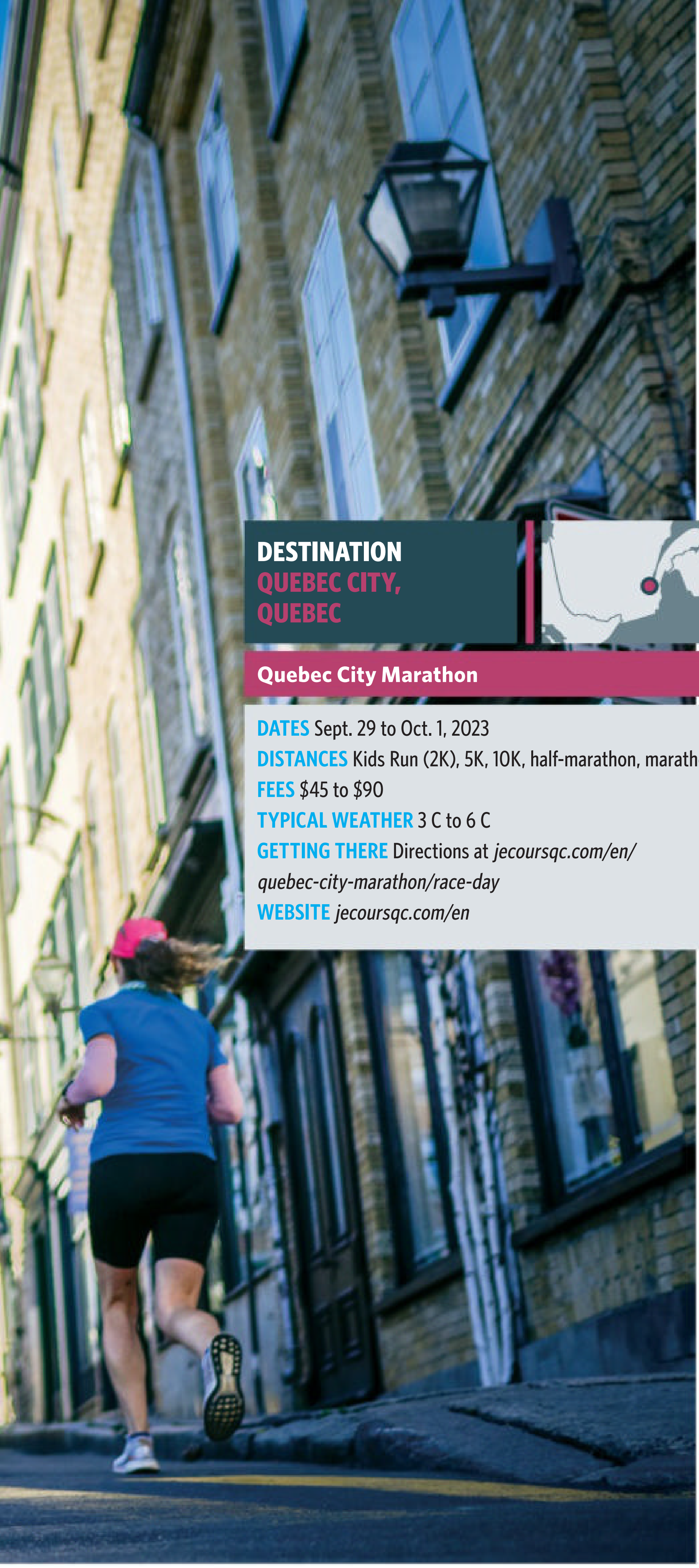
Another year brings another chance to participate in one of the country's most well-established and breathtaking races. The Quebec City Marathon—*42.2 Beneva Québec* to locals—takes place this year on Oct. 1.

While there are some changes to the route to accommodate the construction of the new tramway network, runners will still get to run through the postcard-perfect Old Town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. (It should be noted, however, that the Old Town is not just a tourist attraction, but is, in fact, also home to several thousand residents.)

Along the marathon route, runners will run past attractions like the Pont du Québec, the Plains of Abraham (which are awash in fall colours at this time of year), the Old Port and the famous Gare du Palais train station; the towering and stately Chateau Frontenac, with its copper roof, is visible from many parts of the course. But the course also takes you through some of the city's funkier neighbourhoods, such as Montcalm and Limoilou, as well as the Grande Allée.

The course starts and finishes at Place Jean-Béliveau (site of the Videotron Centre, home to the Remparts hockey team), and runners follow a slightly rolling course into the heart of the city and along the river. There are two significant hills: one going down, near the start, and a long climb between kilometres 12 and 14 (but you can easily distract yourself with the beauty of the stone buildings in the Old Town).

Put on and hosted by Je Cours QC, the race makes a great fall getaway weekend for the family, with the marathon just one of several distances to choose from. There is also a 5K (on Saturday afternoon,



DESTINATION QUEBEC CITY, QUEBEC

Quebec City Marathon

DATES Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, 2023
DISTANCES Kids Run (2K), 5K, 10K, half-marathon, marathon
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GETTING THERE Directions at *jecoursqc.com/en/quebec-city-marathon/race-day*
WEBSITE *jecoursqc.com/en*

02:10:34
21.1 KM
beneva
10 KM

Sept. 30) and a 10K and a half-marathon (Sunday morning, with staggered start times). There is even a 2K race for the kids on Saturday afternoon.

The Quebec City Marathon is certified by Athletics Canada and is a Boston qualifier—i.e., an excellent place to try for your next PB (despite that big hill).

Dedicated to highlighting the beauty of Quebec City, runners get a chance to experience the city's living history. This year is set to continue the beautiful tradition that this race brings. *Bonne chance!* R

Stirling Myles writes about running, ultrarunning, music and mental health from his home in Gainesville, Fla., and is training for the Orcas Island SwimRun.

Nicolas Hallet, Mathieu Belanger, Mathieu Belanger

FINE TUNING

2022 World Championships 800m bronze medallist Marco Arop is one of Canada's best hopes for another medal in Budapest this summer—and is a budding amateur musician, to boot

By Paul Gains

As members of Canada's team exited the dining hall at their pre-world-championships holding camp, the familiar melody of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah* wafted down the corridor. Approaching the source of this magical sound, they were surprised to discover 800m runner Marco Arop sitting at the piano. They looked on quietly until he finished, then burst into enthusiastic applause. Arop, who had been unaware he had an audience, turned to face them with a smile.

Two weeks later, the 24-year-old Edmontonian would again provide his teammates with stellar entertainment, by winning the bronze medal in the 800m at the 2022 World Championships in Eugene, Ore. Gary Reed and Melissa Bishop-Nriagu are the only other Canadians who have ever won world championship medals at the distance.

"I was playing a few different songs," Arop recalls of that night in Langley, B.C., sharing his fondness for Beethoven and Debussy. "*Hallelujah* is probably the most recognizable. I started learning it a couple of years ago, when I got my first keyboard and started learning the basics of music theory through YouTube tutorials.

"I never took lessons outside of school music classes," he goes on. "It has always been a dream of mine to play various instruments, so, when I had time, and when I was able to buy my own keyboard, I started learning right away. Whenever I have free time, I play."

Arop has found more hours in the day since putting the brakes on his Information Systems studies at Mississippi State University two years ago. Attending classes while training and recovering, receiving physiotherapy and studying into the late evening had left him overwhelmed.

Due, no doubt, at least partly to this decision, his recent results have been sublime. In addition to the world championship bronze, he has emerged as a world-class runner, winning Diamond League meetings in Lausanne and Birmingham, setting a Canadian 1,000m record (2:14.35) and lowering his 800m personal best to 1:43.26—just six one-hundredths of a second off Brandon McBride's national record.

Though he intends to complete his degree eventually, for now his primary focus is on continuing to develop as a runner while also improving his musical chops, on both the piano and on his Epiphone Les Paul electric guitar. Imitating the sounds of guitar legends Jimi Hendrix, Eddie Van Halen and John Mayer is another source of fascination. Music, he finds, has a calming effect, amid the constant tension and release of training and competing.

These days, Arop's world championship medal occupies a prominent position in his Starkville, Miss., apartment as a not-too-subtle reminder about which of his talents currently pays the bills. "Normally, the medal would be at home in Edmonton," he explains. "But I knew a lot of people would ask me about it, so I carried it down with me to the States.

"It is definitely a source of pride. It's something all athletes strive for—to get on the podium. And whenever you are representing your country, you want to make them proud. Just seeing that medal—I don't bring it out a lot; it kind of sits there, and knowing it's there it means a lot. I think the best thing I could do is bring it some company—another medal!"

THE CRESCENDO

Arop laughs at his joke, surprising himself with this break from humility. Talk to anyone who knows him, and they will say the same thing: success hasn't changed him. He's humble—almost awkwardly so.

His roommate in Eugene was 2021 Olympic 5,000m silver medallist Moh Ahmed, with whom he has developed a strong friendship. Arop spent some time with his friend in Portland before the world championships, and they were roommates for almost three weeks in Vancouver while getting treatment from sports physiotherapist Marylou Lamy.

Ahmed has watched the younger man's progression with delight. "You could seen the calmness within him," Ahmed remembers fondly of their time in Eugene. "He is a very quiet, humble guy—soft-spoken. You could see he was ready. All I was telling him was, hey man, you are ready. I have been around people that have medalled, and when I have been ready to medal, and you are giving me that kind of vibe. I was telling him those kinds of things.

"The fact he has had a lot of success in the Diamond League, he has won races, he has come second—he knows what it takes. And I think, from experiencing that, he truly believes he belongs. That's the biggest thing that stood out in Eugene. When he arrived, we were

CANADA
TDK
AROP
OREGON22
6

Kevin Morris

Marco Arop celebrates his bronze medal at the 2022 World Athletics Championships in the same room talking. There was no anxiety. He had a calm presence. He wholeheartedly knew he could medal."

Although Arop arrived in Starkville in 2018 fully intending to compete for the MSU Bulldogs during all four years of eligibility, his incredibly fast ascent from being a second-place finisher at the 2018 NCAA to a seventh-place finish in the 2019 world championships final resulted in him turning professional in January 2020.

He is represented by John Regis of U.K.-based Astra Partners. Regis himself was a world class sprinter, winning two Olympic medals as a member of Great Britain's 4x100m relay team. The first order of business resulted in a comfortable Adidas contract, which means Arop can afford to live by himself in Starkville.

Music, he finds, has a calming effect, amid the constant tension and release of training and competing

"I can say I am pretty fortunate to be in the situation I am in—I don't have to worry about the financial aspect," Arop concedes. "My main focus has been training and getting better. Adidas has trusted me and given me this opportunity. I know how difficult it can be to finance a career in track and field."

In addition to this contract, he receives funding from Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program, as well as appearance money on the European circuit. He can afford to pick and choose races, rather than over-race due to financial need (which has sometimes led to injury for many other athletes).

"I love competing—I love racing," he admits. "But it can get in the way of training and progressing, because with competing comes the travel, and we have to factor in training time. If it was up to me, I would race every chance I could, but, thankfully, I have a coach who realized how many races are too much."

Chris Woods, who became MSU head coach in 2019, continues to write Arop's training program. The coach himself was a good collegiate 800m runner for the Bulldogs between 2005 and 2008, recording a personal best of 1:48.54. And for a couple of years, he worked with McBride, who is also a former Bulldog.

At first glance, the training volume appears very light for a world championship medallist and someone who has run 800m in 1:43.26. But upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that it is designed to enhance Arop's natural abilities and to build the strength necessary to get through two rounds of a championships unscathed, ready to battle for medals. Arop was also thrilled to run a sub-four-minute mile (3:57.50) indoors in January 2021.

Chatting via WhatsApp, Arop is under no time constraints, appearing eager to talk about his life. "Today is an easy workout; yesterday was hard," he offers. Asked what constitutes a hard workout in January, he explains that Coach Woods had him run 300 metres 12 times indoors, with a 100-metre jog for recovery. The first few were timed in 45 seconds, but they got progressively faster until he was running them in 39 seconds. He proudly reveals his long runs are now 11 miles (almost 18 km) on Sunday, bringing his weekly total to a relatively modest 40 miles (64 km).

Older track aficionados will remember that 1980 Olympic 800m champion Steve Ovett regularly put in nearly three times that mileage over the winter. Even Seb Coe, who set two world 800m records (1:41.73 in 1981), ran 60 to 70 miles (97 to 113 km) per week. But neither Ovett nor Coe could run 400m in 46.10 seconds at sea level, as Arop did last spring.

Arguably, he is competing in the toughest discipline in the Olympic and world championships program. Reaching the semi-finals is hard enough, but only the first two finishers from each of three semi-final heats advance automatically, plus the next two fastest finishers. Three races in four days means there is no room for error.

Arop made the 2019 world championship final in Doha, but was a spent force, finishing a disappointed seventh. Then there was the agony of missing the Tokyo Olympic final two years later.

"I think it was possibly an over-correction from Doha," he says quietly of that catastrophe. "I was much stronger and faster, and physically I was in the best shape I had ever been. But, mentally, I don't think I was prepared to be the athlete I could be on that stage.

"I remember going into that Tokyo semi-final with the attitude that I had to run a certain time to make the final, or run a certain way. I think I put too much pressure on myself, and told myself I had to run in front of the pack. That wasn't the best strategy for the day."

Arop is a big man—6'4" (1.93 m)—just like the world record holder, David Rudisha of Kenya, who won two Olympic titles by going straight to the front and daring anyone to come past. So, too, was Joachim Cruz, who denied Sebastian Coe the 800m Olympic gold in 1984. Many were surprised when Arop didn't always lead from the gun.

EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY TIES

Arop's Canadian club coach, Ron Thompson, who helped him get the MSU scholarship, says Arop hasn't changed much from the young, impressionable boy whose performances accelerated so quickly. The pair remain in close contact. Coach Woods says of the Canadian: "Coach Ron helps us with strength training, as well as conducting workouts with Marco when I am unable to travel with him. He is an integral part of our preparation."

Thompson remembers seeing Arop race for the first time, and immediately recognized his potential as an 800m runner. At the time, Arop was also playing

Austin Frayser

basketball for Blessed Oscar Romero High School. Fortunately, the basketball coach, Mike Wojcicki, was also the track coach, so when it came to steering Arop into middle-distance running, where his potential was greater, there was no conflict. Arop joined Thompson's Voleo Track Club, and quickly developed into an excellent junior athlete, improving from 2:04 to 1:53.12 in his first season.

To this day, Thompson remains a family friend, often joining them for home-cooked meals. When an important decision is to be made, Arop's parents, Rau Komjak Akol and Aluel Laul Deng, often ask their son, "What does Ron think?"

Arop is very close to his family. He and his five brothers were born in Sudan. His parents came from the village of Abyei, on the border between Sudan and what is now South Sudan, eventually moving to Khartoum, the Sudanese capital. But when the civil war broke out, they escaped to Egypt.

"I must have been about two at the time," Arop says. "We weren't in Egypt very long. My parents would tell me the biggest thing was trying to secure a future for us—me and my five brothers. Had they stayed in Sudan, it would have been unsafe, and they would have been caught up in the civil war.

"My father had various jobs; I think he worked as a chef, he worked security at the airport at one point, various jobs. Same thing in Egypt. My mom would do housekeeping. Eventually we came to Canada as political refugees."

Over the years, Thompson has watched Arop mentor young athletes whenever he returns to Edmonton. At the Kinsmen Sports Centre, kids will approach him for selfies, and he occasionally hands out awards at local track meets. The importance of mentors is not lost on Arop, whose relationship with Moh Ahmed has meant so much to him, and he wants to pass it on.

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2022 World Athletics Championships

One of these young athletes is Mats Swanson, who ran 800m in 1:51.86 for Leduc High School in Alberta and enrolled at Louisiana State University in January. Arop has clearly left an impression upon him. "I often ask him questions related to running, and I find great value in our conversations," Swanson says. "He is very knowledgeable with regard to training. He's also fun to talk to, and he's typically focused on the person he's speaking with, rather than himself."

On visits home, Arop mostly spends time with his family, ordering dinner from Roadrunner Pizza, like they did during his formative years. And although Wojcicki is no longer coaching him, they still see each other. The coach changed careers and is now a financial advisor, counting Arop as one of his clients.

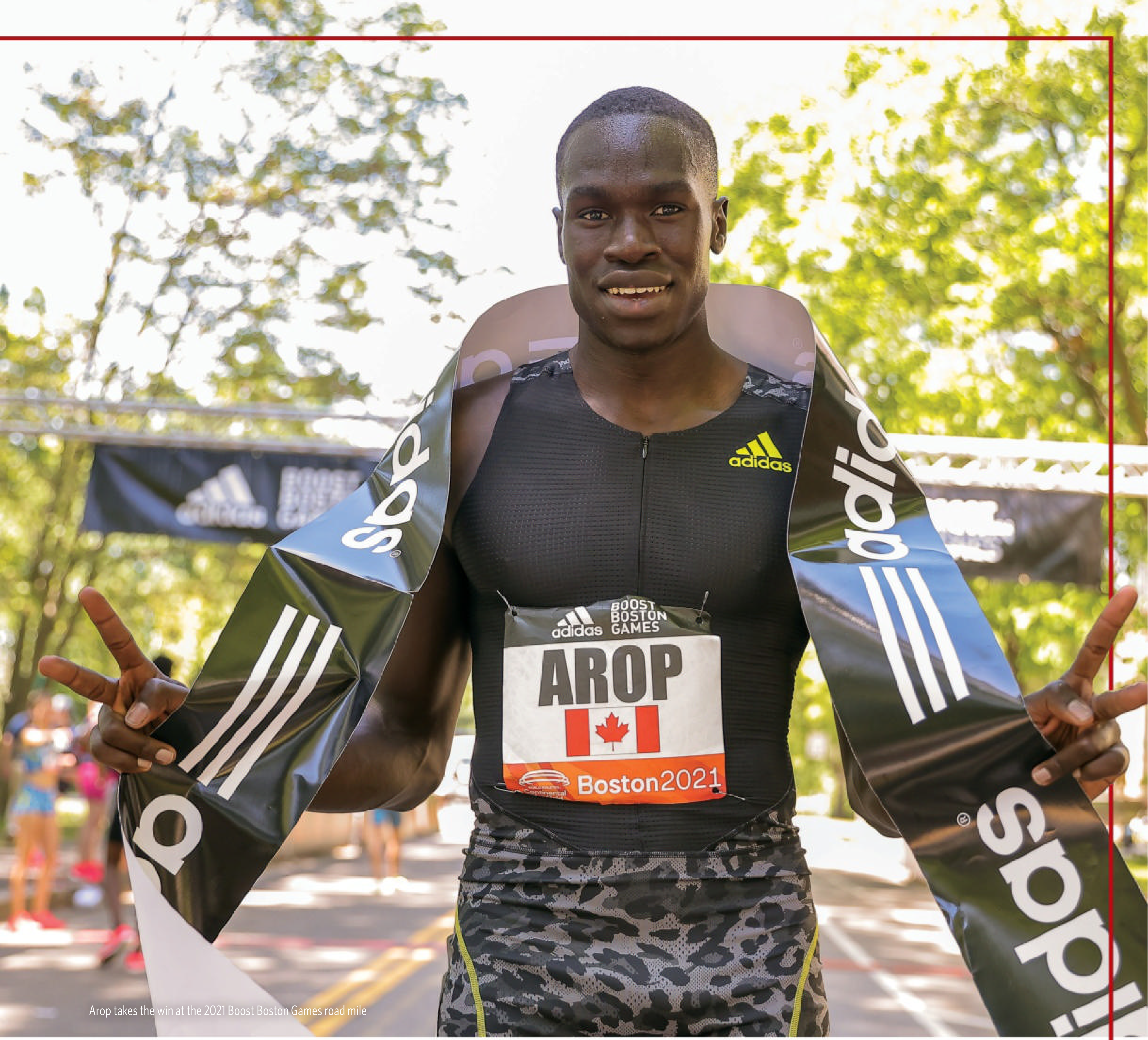
STAYING FOCUSED

Despite his close ties to Edmonton, Arop spent Christmas in Starkville; that was to ensure his revised winter training went as well as possible. With the 2023 world championships set for Budapest (Aug. 19–27), he plans to increase his medal collection, and he was obviously excited about the new training program. "I think my fitness this year may surprise some people—it may even surprise me!" he says, laughing. "I want to be able to end the season without any regrets, just knowing I gave 100 per cent in every race."

Earning another world championship medal in Budapest remains the year's primary target, but he would also like to see how much faster he can run in a one-off situation. To that end, beating the Canadian record and getting under 1:43 are high on his list of priorities. "Absolutely, that has been a goal of mine," he says with confidence. "My coach understands the goal is always to win medals, and chasing times is second. However, I think the more fit we are overall, if I can break limits and put myself in a position to be the best I can be, we can get medals and break records."

Clearly, he has thought about what he needs to do to run sub-1:43: "I would break it down into 200s rather than 400s," he reveals. "One thing I learned from the 2021 Olympic year is that I couldn't

Kevin Morris



Arop takes the win at the 2021 Boost Boston Games road mile

Arguably, he is competing in the toughest discipline in the Olympic and world championships program. Three races in four days means there is no room for error

handle 24-seconds-low for the first 200 m. Chances are, I wouldn't have anything left in the legs over the last hundred metres. So I would probably say a 24.5 first 200 m, then 49.5 at the 400 m. At that point, the last lap is just to maintain form and not relax, and not strain; if I can do that and hold the pace, 26 seconds for the next 200 m, I should be able to get under 1:43."

Arop's enthusiasm is not unwarranted. His experience at such a young age is another weapon when he lines up against the world's best. Now this proud Edmontonian is poised to become the greatest 800m runner ever to represent Canada.

Could the meditative effect of his music have something to do with it? The thought makes him smile.

Paul Gains is a full-time freelance journalist. He has covered 11 IAAF (now World Athletics) outdoor world championships and five summer Olympic Games.

Diana Bolton

RUNNING ON FAITH

It sometimes seems as though runners are a super-religious bunch. It's probably just a coincidence—but could it also be that running is inherently spiritual?

By Madeleine Kelly

Running is full of religious tropes. Take the most famous Steve Prefontaine quote: "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift"—and by gift, he means "God-given talent." This theme, coupled with devotion and sacrifice, are central to both running and religion. (Many runners would probably say that running *is* their religion.)

On the other hand, running is rigorously measured, timed, studied, analyzed and assessed—down to the hundreth of a second. Our sport doesn't have judges; it's scientific. Our results are as objective as it's possible to be—which seems far removed from religion.

Yet it's interesting to consider where running and religion intersect—that is, among runners who also embrace religion. In Canada, the number of people with a religious affiliation has declined significantly in the last 20 years—over a third of Canadians do not consider themselves religious, whereas 77 per cent of Canadians considered themselves Christian in 2001. And that's just one of dozens of religions. The 2021 Canadian census still found that 53 per cent of the population consider themselves Christian, and another 10 per cent identify as Muslim, Hindu or Sikh.

The census found that the profile of religion in Canada is shifting—fewer people identify as religious, but among those who do, there's rapidly increasing diversity among denominations and beliefs. And still, in 2021, the majority of Canadians identify with some form of spirituality.

Many runners who practise religion share openly about it with their followers on social media—something that remains private in most professional spaces. This can sometimes give the impression that the running community is quite religious. This impression may be accurate, or not—but it seems there is something inherently spiritual about running, and that running serves as a form of inspiration for people of many backgrounds.

IS RUNNING BECOMING A SUBSTITUTE FOR RELIGION?

While most Canadians still declare some form of religious affiliation, church attendance is shrinking. Martha Tatarnic, an Anglican priest and runner in St. Catharines, Ont., saw her parish attendance fall during the pandemic. "Institutional decline is a thing across the board," she says. "Until Covid, I had always led congregations that were modestly growing. Coming out of Covid, however, the congregation is smaller and older."

> Most of those who would say that they have spiritual beliefs also say that organized religion isn't part of it

For Tatarnic, running and her faith go hand in hand. “I say to my congregation all the time: I know I talk about running a lot, but there are so many running metaphors that apply to life and faith,” she says.

Among the runners I spoke with, there was hesitancy to use the word “religion.” Most of those who would say that they have a relationship with God also say that organized religion isn’t necessarily part of it.

That resonated with me: I grew up Catholic, received my first Communion and confirmation, and I went to church with my parents and sisters almost every Sunday. As a kid, I didn’t feel that connected to the church itself, but I enjoyed the time spent with my loved ones. Church was something we did together.

As an adult, I rarely go to church—usually only with my parents. Going to church fills me with nostalgia, but it also weighs on me that the church has caused so many people so much pain. While I no longer feel religious, I do still feel spiritual. I don’t know what to call it, exactly, but I definitely believe in something bigger than myself. And much of the spirituality I feel is enacted through running.

Sasha Gollish of Toronto is an engineer, high-performance coach, Pan Am Games medallist and World Masters record holder. She is a lover of math, numbers and the “sciency” side of sport—but she’s also a firm believer in the spiritual aspect. “I grew up going to synagogue, when my Bubbie and Zaidie [grandparents] were alive,” she says. “When I was a kid, we always made an effort to celebrate Shabbat on Friday nights.” While she’s no longer an active participant in the Jewish religion, she still feels very connected to the Jewish community.

In 2017, Gollish attended the Jerusalem Maccabiah Games, a celebration of Jewish people in sport. “The Jewish religion is rooted in community—I learned that in Israel,” she says. “I realized there, that for me, religion is practised through sharing food and running.” She feels that physicality is rooted in spirituality: “Feeling connected to my body, feeling connected to nature, and feeling connected to the people who are out there with me—that’s spiritual, to me.”

SOMETHING BIGGER THAN ONESELF

John Gay is a Kelowna, B.C., native and Olympic 3,000m steeplechase finalist for whom both spirituality and running have always been a big part of his life. “My parents are both practising Christians who were raised Catholic, and that was the first church I was introduced

Diana Bolton

“Feeling connected to my body, to nature and to the people who are out there with me—that’s spiritual”

to as a kid,” he says. “Their faith impacts their day-to-day life. It’s part of their speech and their rhythms.”

Growing up, Gay saw the value religion had for his parents, and knew it could be of value to him as well. But even with the strong example from his family, it took him a while to feel connected to his spirituality beyond the formalities of church. “I practised, but didn’t really feel connected to it,” he says. “But into my later teens and university years, I started to really understand my personal sense of faith.”

Gay, who currently calls himself a Protestant, but doesn’t align himself with one religion, draws a distinction between religion and faith. He feels religion is based on tasks and rituals, but faith has a deeper and more personal meaning, and one that isn’t necessarily tied to religion.

His father, Brad, introduced him to running. Gay ran cross country through elementary school, and while he was passionate about running, he was never, as he says, “all that good.” “I had a sense that running was my thing, and I wanted to do well at it,” Gay says, “which is odd, because I wasn’t winning. In the early days, I was intensely competitive, but for really selfish reasons.” It wasn’t until Grade 11 that a local club coach approached him and asked if he’d consider joining. “I felt flattered to be invited to join, because I certainly wasn’t a superstar,” he says.

By his final year of high school, the results started to come. “I was suddenly beating people I couldn’t touch in earlier years. The fact that I cared so much, and seemed to be physically inclined to it, has always felt spiritual to me,” he says.

For Gay, running, like spirituality, has always given him a sense of the existence of something bigger than himself. “I certainly don’t think I’m saving the world by running, but I do feel like it’s something I was called by God to do,” he says. “My faith helps to ground my running. It’s so easy to tie your identity to your performance, because running isn’t a job that you can clock in and clock out of. There’s certainly a feeling of: I’m a loser if I lose, and I’m a winner if I win.”

Gay’s faith helps remind him that there are bigger things than sport. “Because I believe I’m a child of God and I’m inherently loved, my results will never define me,” he says. “Taking that pressure off is actually very freeing.” Because of Gay’s relationship with God, he’s able to extricate his self-worth from his running results. A “greater purpose” can take different forms for different people, but across the board, it helps to alleviate some of the highs and lows of performance—for Gay, his greater purpose just happens to be God.

While Christianity remains the dominant religion in North America, the profile is quickly shifting, with followers of Islam among the most rapidly growing group. The U.K.’s Sir Mo Farah, the multiple Olympic champion and one of the most decorated runners in history, is Muslim. In a 2016 interview with British *GQ* magazine, he echoed many of the sentiments Gay expressed—mainly that he feels that faith helps with the unpredictable nature of life (and running). “My religion means a lot to me,” he says. “It is one of the

"I'm working on growing stronger relationships within the church community, but the strongest relationships I have right now are within running"

Diana Bolton

reasons I am like I am. I feel some things you can control, some you can't. I am not the most religious person in the world, but I do believe."

Kate Van Buskirk, a Toronto-based journalist and an Olympian in the 5,000m, did not grow up in a religious home, nor would she describe herself as particularly spiritual. But what keeps her inspired, like Gay and Farah, is something bigger than herself. "Running is a sport, but in many cases it happens in solitude," she says. "I feel most peaceful when I am outside, by myself, running. That's when I feel most aware that there's something bigger than me."

Van Buskirk is a Commonwealth Games medallist and a former Canadian record holder and national champion. She has seen the top of the sport, but she ultimately feels most alive on an easy run, far from the world stage—far, even, from a road or track: "I wouldn't want to be a runner if I couldn't just go for a run," she says. "That's what has kept me grounded—moving in nature and feeling like I'm exploring something outside of myself. I don't identify as a spiritual person, but I think an easy run is the closest I get." Still, she recognizes the similarities between religious practice and running: "Sacrifice, devotion, love, commitment and involvement—those are all ways to describe running that hold many parallels with religion," she says.

RUNNING AS COMMUNITY

For so many, spiritual or not, the running community seems to serve as a modern substitute for a church community. Gabriel Jarquin is a Toronto-based marathoner who was raised in an evangelical home, but has not carried the practice into his adult life. "My parents grew up Catholic, and then converted to Pentecostal," he says. "That church had very strict rules. Everything was binary—'good' and 'bad.'" Discovering he was gay was both challenging and confusing: "I remember thinking, now that I'm discovering this about myself, how do I fit in here?" he says. "Growing up, I was taught that God was to be feared. The goal was to avoid hell. I wasn't taught that God was love."

Jarquin stepped away from formal religion and has never returned, but says, "I do consider myself a Christ follower—a person of faith," adding that, "the running community has helped me consider all of the possible manifestations of church. It made me think, what is church? And who's to say running isn't? It made me consider that what I was looking for was already in front of me." Jarquin sees God everywhere in the running community: "It's interactions between runners, it's family, it's love. It's what his teachings are all about."

Gay would probably agree. While he has come and gone from church communities, the running community has remained steadfast in Gay's life. "In the last number of years, I've been much closer to the running community," he says. "I met both my best friend and my wife through running. I'm working on growing stronger relationships within the church community, but the strongest relationships I have right now are within running."

RELIGION AS A BRAND

Part of the job description for elite runners is to cultivate a personal brand. A strong social media following, coupled with solid results, is part of the equation for a company when considering an athlete's value, and garnering a following happens most easily through an authentic presentation of self. For some, that includes mention of their religion or spirituality.

Jarquin has used Instagram to share his faith journey, and to help others (especially members of the LGBTQ community) feel less alone. "When I use a hashtag about God, I want people to know they can hold two truths—they can believe in God *and* be a queer person," he says. "Through learning to be vulnerable and authentic, you become the best version of yourself. Being me has provided so much connection with others."

Jarquin commented that Krista DuChene, Canadian Olympian and marathoner, also speaks of her Christian faith on her social media. "I just noticed she made reference to being Christian, and I thought, OK, cool," he says. "Because I feel like lots of people hide their faith, because it can be such a loaded thing."

In her Instagram profile, DuChene describes herself as a Christian first, a wife second and a runner third. "I want my faith to be there on social media," she told me. "It's important for me to express my thoughts and feelings from love and truth. It's such a big part of who I am."

CANADA AND THE U.S.

Among American athletes, it can seem that God is an integral part of most celebration speeches—so often athletes thank their coach, their family and God. This is less common among Canadian athletes; it's not baked into the culture in the same way. "There is quite a marked difference between how religion is practised in the States versus Canada," says Tatarnic. "The U.S. is much more overtly religious, whereas Canada has a more private approach. Religion is less often discussed in the public sphere, and Canadians tend to treat it as a more private and personal choice."

Gay mentioned this phenomenon as well, feeling that "Glory to God" has become a bit of a throwaway line. "Sport lends itself to propping up your religious views—with spirituality, an athlete can create a narrative that deflects some glory. It's a trope, becoming a bit of a cliché to thank God after a win."

For American sports figures, much of their audience believes in a higher power—so they are, in effect, "preaching to the choir." And in that context, "Glory to God" seems like a pretty succinct way to wrap up an interview.

While the "letter-of-the-law" approach to religion is declining, people are embracing more flexible ways of approaching spirituality. A tacit connection to religion or belief in a higher power remains strong, and it makes sense that this dynamic would play out in sports and personal branding.

Many runners, religious or not, take a spiritual approach to their sport—finding comfort in the mystery and magic that comes from a great race or run. Whether you call it energy, flow state, getting into your groove, or the presence of God, a great run can provide a sense of balance and harmony.

On a superficial level, running and religion have many things in common—the practice, the rituals, the community. But looking deeper, the connection is even more fundamental. The people interviewed for this story run because it makes them feel a synergy between their bodies and minds. In short, it makes them feel alive. Faith serves a similar purpose. Formally religious or not, for many, belief in God brings inner peace—in much the same way that a good run does. While the two are different, the goal is the same. R

Madeleine Kelly, who lives in Hamilton, is an Olympian and two-time national champion in the 800m. In 2022 she represented Canada at the World Athletics Indoor Championships, World Athletics (Outdoor) Championships and Commonwealth Games.

WARMING UP TO CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY

By Andrew McKay

How individual runners can do their bit in the face of climate emergency

If you were looking for a sign that climate change has reached a whole new level of importance in Canada, it came on Feb. 20. That Sunday night, the 44th edition of Ottawa's Winterlude festival wrapped up—with one major absence. For the first time in the event's history, the Rideau Canal Skateway didn't open. Before 2023, the latest the canal had opened for skating was Feb. 2 (in 2002). In 2023, it didn't open at all.

Warming winters are a stark example of what's been happening to our climate in recent years. And there are indications that those patterns are creeping into the race season. Consider the 2012 Boston Marathon, where temperatures reached 31 C in April, or the 2007 Chicago Marathon, which was called off halfway through as temperatures hit 30 C (in October).

But there's evidence that these extremes are no longer so extreme. The 2022 Manitoba Marathon was cancelled an hour after it started last June, as humidex values reached 40 C. Races across Canada and the U.S. were run in less-than-ideal conditions in 2022, and with the 2023 race season underway, there's reason to expect more of the same.

Damian Hall is an ultratrail runner of some renown, having set a course record at the 268-mile Spine Race, dubbed Britain's most brutal race, last winter. He also appeared at this year's Barkley Marathons in Tennessee for the first time, attempting (but not completing) a fifth loop of the notoriously difficult course. He's also an author and climate change advocate. (On Instagram, Hall acknowledged his own "climate hypocrisy" in flying to the U.S. to participate in the Barkley.) His latest book, *We Can't Run Away From This* (reviewed in *Canadian Running*'s Trail Special Issue), explores the root causes of climate change and the running industry's culpability in the worsening crisis. Hall told us the evidence of climate change's impact on races is already apparent if you know where to look—like the part of the world where summer 2023 has already arrived.

"There was a race in New Zealand (the Tarawera by UTMB 102K), and it was completely re-routed because of landslides from epic flooding," Hall says. "It would be hard to prove they weren't linked to the climate breakdown. At the Australian Ultra Trail (held in December, 2022) the course was really revamped, with a lot more flat bits—21 km of the trail race was run on roads. In both cases, the course was not what people signed up for, so it is happening. It's not just heat, necessarily; it's extreme weather."

Confronting a climate crisis can feel daunting, but it's up to individuals, as well as race organizations, to do what they can.

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Matt Stetson

Races as change leaders

Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend, held each year in late May, has a page on its website dedicated to stories of hot-weather races and cancellations. It also has tips on how to stay safe in extreme heat. Run Ottawa (the organization behind Ottawa Race Weekend) has also signed on to the Sports for Climate Action Framework, as part of the United Nations Climate Action Plan. The organization has set goals to reduce emissions by 50 per cent by 2030, aiming for net-zero emissions by 2040. The organization also offers climate impact mitigation options, such as the ability to turn down mailed amenities or medals, with a donation of part of the registration fee to climate charities as a reward.

The race also offers a reusable cup for participants—a gesture appreciated by Ryan Wolfert, who runs the Edmonton Half Marathon every summer, and fundraises for charities like the Ocean Legacy Foundation and the Amazon Rainforest Conservancy. "Races do consume a lot of single-use waste, which I know ends up in our oceans," Wolfert says. "I think they can do better by using reusable cups and dishes and providing runners with more healthy meals and drinks that don't require the removal of trees."

Many trail races have already gone cupless. It's an option that might not be suitable for shorter races, but there's still a lot road races can do to start changing participants' attitudes and expectations. "I have amazing race directors regularly saying they're trying to cut out the T-shirts or cut down water stations," Hall says. "There's a percentage of people who are against it or outraged. I think, ultimately, these people haven't been well-informed. I'm sure if people can join the dots and realize how bad these things are, most would be on side. I believe that in Britain, for road races, you have to have an aid station every 5K. Do you really need that? Maybe on a baking-hot day, but in the winter, that does seem excessive."

Other races are taking even greater strides toward climate change mitigation. The Berlin Marathon is incentivizing local travel, for example. Participants get a free Berlin transportation ticket for their arrival and departure, and on race day, their bibs can be used as tickets for all public transport. In addition, the race has negotiated discounted train travel to and from Berlin.

The problem of air travel

Of course, none of that really matters if you're flying from Canada to Germany; the carbon footprint of your flight far outweighs any climate-positive efforts you might undertake once you're on the ground. This speaks to what Hall says is the single greatest contributor to the climate emergency in the running world: travel. "Really, the message is that that often, over 90 per cent of emissions comes from participant travel," Hall says. "Races should be sharing that information. People won't realize that, necessarily; they might think about the plastic bottles or the T-shirt waste. I think it's a huge responsibility—first the information, but then incentivize lower-carbon travel."

Kilian Jornet, perhaps the world's greatest mountain and ultrarunner, made waves in 2021 when he committed to reducing his race travel to a maximum of three CO2e tonnes per year—about the equivalent of one return flight from Europe to the U.S.'s west coast (depending on who is measuring). He also promised to eliminate non-essential travel, to stop travelling overseas for filming purposes and

Three ways runners can reduce their environmental impact

Travel

Flights to races are the single biggest contributor to C02 emissions in the running world. Choose local races where possible, and take the train when you can.

Clothing

As much as 10 per cent of annual global carbon emissions come from the clothing industry. Turn down race shirts and swag, and focus on high-quality, long-lasting running clothing that won't end up in a landfill.

Food

In addition to higher consumption of protein, runners consume more packaged food and beverages than non-runners. Balance your food choices, and prepare homemade snacks to bring with you.

> "At the Australian Ultra Trail, the course was really revamped—21 km of the trail race was run on roads. In both cases, the course was not what people signed up for"

If you're flying from Canada to Germany, the carbon footprint of your flight far outweighs any climate-positive efforts you might undertake once you're on the ground

How races can reduce their climate footprint

1. Schedule start times so participants can get to the start line by public transit
2. Prioritize alternative modes of transport on race websites
3. Make race shirts and swag an opt-in item, and charge extra
4. Improve quality of shirts and other items, so they last longer

to stop using photographers who had to travel a long way to work on a project with him. Again, that's easy to say when you're a mountain runner who lives in Europe, where most of the major competitions can be reached by rail. But take Innes FitzGerald, for example; the 16-year-old phenom turned down an opportunity to race for Great Britain at the 2023 World XC Championships in Bathurst, Australia, in February, because of "the grief I would feel taking the flight," she told *Athletics Weekly*.

Canada's geography makes it impossible to participate in a wide range of running events without getting on a plane or going for a long drive, but a French study found that participating in a regional race that included a 1,000-km round-trip train-travel option reduced carbon impact by six times, compared to flying from Paris to the New York City Marathon. When it comes to staying off planes, every little bit helps.

One thing we can probably agree on is that the glamorization of climate-harming events needs to change. In 2016, Abbott World Marathon Majors introduced the AWMM Six Star Finisher Medal for runners who complete all six world majors (the Tokyo, London, Boston, Berlin, Chicago and New York City Marathons). Before the introduction of the medal and its associated marketing program, about 1,600 runners had completed all six races. As of the 2023 Tokyo Marathon, that number has ballooned to more than 10,000. No matter where a participant lives, it's impossible to complete this quest without at least three intercontinental flights.

Which brings us to the absurdity (from a climate perspective) that is the World Marathon Challenge—a seven-day, seven-marathons-on-seven-continents race series. It costs $57,000 to participate; that doesn't include flights to Cape Town, South Africa, where runners gather for the first of seven marathons (or the flight home from Miami, site of the final race in the series). In between, about 50 runner participants fly via charter jet to Antarctica, back to South Africa, then to Australia, Dubai, Spain and Brazil before finishing up in the U.S. On an impact-per-person basis, the World Marathon Challenge is undoubtedly the most climate-damaging running event.

For its part, the Challenge says it offsets all of the related flying emissions via a *Carbonfund.org* donation. "It should be noted that the event takes place only once per year," the race says on its website. "Although there are eight flights in one week, it is also only eight flights in one year. Furthermore, unlike major mass-participation events, only a very small number travel to take part in the World Marathon Challenge, and it is much more environmentally friendly in that regard."

"Running events can be hugely damaging," Hall says, pointing, in particular, to the Paris Marathon as an egregious example. The race boasts more than 50,000 participants annually. Hall says it underwent an independent audit of its emissions, which measured its impact at 26,500 tonnes of CO2e—as big a volume of greeenhouse gases as that generated by 34 people in their lifetimes. (CO2e is a more accurate measurement of climate impact than CO2 alone, since it also includes other greenhouse gases besides carbon dioxide.) Hall says 95 per cent of those emissions come from the air travel generated by participants.

Uncredited, Matt Stetson

“Don’t obsess over every personal footprint—anything you can do toward nudging the system is helpful”

Beware of “greenwashing”

Hall also cautions that not every environmentally friendly initiative is as beneficial as it seems. A recycling initiative between the Singapore government and U.S. petrochemical giant Dow Inc. promised to grind down and reuse the rubberized soles and midsoles of donated shoes to build playgrounds and running tracks. But when the news organization Reuters implanted tracking devices into 11 pairs of donated shoes, they found that none had been recycled.

“The greenwashing in the sportswear industries is horrendous, I think,” Hall says. “It’s so quick to say, ‘Hey, look: we got five per cent more recycled plastic in the shoe; we’re sustainable!’ It’s bullshit, so that’s really frustrating and upsetting.”

While Hall acknowledges that small steps may help, they don’t really mean anything unless we’re willing to undertake significant behavioural disruption. Donating shoes can help, but buying so many running shoes and clothes in the first place is one of a runner’s three biggest contributors to climate change.

That’s not to say, however, that runners should feel existential guilt every time they participate in an event or buy new gear. “To me, it’s just being more considerate of race travel, being more considerate of your kit, try to make it last longer, trying to buy less,” he says. “I say, don’t obsess over every personal footprint, because really, how much is that going to matter in the grand scheme of things? But anything you can do toward nudging the system is helpful. You could be having conversations with family and close friends, or your local running club or fellow runners, that could be more effective.”

Wolfert of Edmonton exemplifies out-of-the-box thinking when it comes to what individual runners can do. “One thing I am really concerned about is the impact of climate change on wildlife,” Wolfert says. “The climate-change-related causes I ran for worked well for a fundraiser, because I am all about wanting to build a better planet for everyone, including wildlife.”

While Wolfert hopes his fundraising runs can inspire others to take action, he’s also starting to think on a bigger scale. He’s a big transit fan, and has reached out to the Edmonton Transit System to inquire about recycling parts from out-of-service vehicles. He wants to use retired seats to help people with mobility issues, and he thinks repurposed transit poles can be useful in making certain parts of the run route. Wolfert thinks the yellow stop cords can be used to mark out the start/finish area. “Even the headlights and/or brake lights could be used as a start light that turns from red to green to start the run,” he says.

In the end, though, Hall says it’s important to have the big conversations, as well as to do the small things: “Talking about climate change is exactly what I think we need, drawing attention to it, putting it out there as the topic to discuss. So to me, that’s e-mailing politicians. Get involved in protests. If you can, support protest groups financially. Find lobbying groups. If it’s too intimidating to join them on the streets, then maybe finance them or support them online.”

Is there any good news? Yes, says Hall: by reading this story, you’re part of the solution. If you care about the issue enough to educate yourself, you can be one of the voices that gets the message out to others. “I think that’s right at the heart of the struggle that people find themselves in: if they care about stuff, it’s working out what are the elephants, and what are the mice? I’m concentrated more on the elephants.”

Andrew McKay is a freelance writer in Toronto. He’s committed to running only local races in 2023.

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MARATHON
beneva – QUÉBEC

SEPT 29 — OCT 1 | 42.2 21.1 10 5 K | KIDS RACE 2K

RUN THROUGH HISTORY.
RUN THE QUEBEC CITY MARATHON.

beneva MONTELLIER FONDS de solidarité FTQ lait au chocolat sports experts Québec Destination Québec cité VILLE DE QUÉBEC JECOURSQC.COM

A
B
C
D
COROS
#EXPL
08
36
23
MON
ALTITUDE 4800
100
18
32
75%
MON
20
3458
POLAR
Today's Suggestion
Tempo
3x8:00@7:55/mi
50:00
GARMIN
11:19
16.92
152
5'45 /km
1:38'50

GPS Watches for 2023

Today's watches have brighter and more colourful displays than ever; here are a few of the year's most interesting updates

Matt Stetson

Coros
Apex 2 Pro

46 mm

$699 Ⓐ

WHO IT'S FOR marathoners, trail runners and ultrarunners looking for great navigation tools and the best battery life available

BATTERY LIFE 75 hours in GPS mode, 30 days in smartwatch mode

Last November, Coros launched two new watches in the Apex series: Apex 2 and Apex 2 Pro, which are very similar—the base Apex 2 doesn't have multiband GPS or as much battery life, and has a smaller screen. (They are also very similar to the more expensive Vertix 2.) New features since the regular Apex and Apex Pro include Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity, a new optical heart rate sensor, blood oxygen sensing and more storage (32 gigabytes for the Pro).

The Pro offers unbeatable battery life for marathoners, ultrarunners and multisport athletes: 75 hours (more than three continuous days) in GPS mode and up to 30 days in smartwatch mode—almost twice as long as the Apex 2 in smartwatch mode and considerably more in GPS mode (still far longer than any other watch in our review)—though note that if you're using continuous multiband GNSS plus dual frequency, battery life is reduced to 25 hours. Some reviewers note that GPS accuracy is "just OK" (though much improved over previous models).

The Pro is a durable watch with a titanium bezel, a touchscreen plus three buttons and a scratch-resistant sapphire glass screen, with multiband and dual-frequency GNSS support and a redesigned GPS antenna—plus it's waterproof to 50 metres. Besides the usual training, recovery and sleep tracking features for 28 different sports (including training and recovery status, training load, race predictor and access to training plans and workouts in the Coros Training Hub), it also has free offline global landscape and topo maps (though no turn-by-turn navigation; route-planning is coming soon), distance to your destination, track the sun's movements, storm alert, nutrition alert, checkpoint feature, course elevation profiles and course deviate alert. HR tracking is very accurate. You can send up to 10 course maps from Strava to your watch via the Coros app.

The watch also has offline music storage (but not streaming), plus GoPro and Insta360 camera control.

Available in a grey, green or black case and mutliple band colours.

Suunto
9 Peak Pro

43 mm

$700 (stainless steel) or **$900** (titanium version) Ⓑ

WHO IT'S FOR Serious runners and multisport enthusiasts

BATTERY LIFE 40 hours in performance (GPS) mode, 70 hours in endurance mode, 21 days in smartwatch mode

Though it looks very similar to the 9 Peak, the Suunto 9 Peak Pro is a significant update with many new components, including a more powerful processor, new GPS chipset and heart rate sensor. It delivers training features for 97 different sports (snorkelling, anyone?), with more customization options than before, in a three-button/touchscreen format; it also offers music controls (but not storage). It also has an altimeter, barometer and compass, plus breadcrumb-trail routing (but no maps). New features include wrist-based running power and Strava Live Segments.

The 9 Peak Pro doesn't have multiband GNSS, but GPS accuracy is pretty good.

The display interface is somewhat more readable than the 9 Peak's (and responds more quickly), but readability could still be better. A plus for those who care: Suunto is partners with more than 200 third-party apps.

This watch's sleek appearance belies its durability, and it can just as easily be worn with business attire as with running gear. (It's also waterproof to 100 m.) There are four stainless steel and two titanium models.

And if environmental sustainability in your watch matters to you, the Suunto 9 Peak Pro is designed and manufactured in Finland with 100 per cent renewable energy; it claims to have the lowest carbon footprint (7.5 kg CO2e) of any smartwatch on the market, fully offset with verifiable carbon units.

Garmin
Forerunner 265

46 mm, 42 mm

$620 Ⓒ

WHO IT'S FOR Serious runners, age groupers and data nerds

BATTERY LIFE 24 hours in GPS mode, 15 days in smartwatch mode

The new Garmin Forerunner 265 takes over where the 255 left off, with a major update: it has the super-bright AMOLED full-colour, durable touchscreen display introduced in the Garmin Epix last year (a big plus when you're running in bright sunlight), plus multiband GPS (meaning you get a more accurate pace and results), yet it's just a little more than half the price of the Epix. (As with the new Forerunner 965, below, for almost all functions you can use either the buttons or the touchscreen, or a combination of the two.)

Besides tracking more than 30 different sports profiles (including triathlon), the 265 has all the functions of the 255, including training readiness, which was introduced last year in the Forerunner 955, and is new for the 265. It also has daily suggested workouts, women's health tracking and the new PacePro function, which helps you pace yourself toward your goal time on a specific course. It also has features like the race predictor, as well as the track running feature, for accurate lap/distance counting, plus incident (fall) detection and Garmin Pay. You can customize the watch face to show up to six data fields per sport.

The accuracy of Garmin's wrist-based heart rate monitoring has improved steadily in recent years, and with these newer watches, it's accurate enough that you can reasonably ditch your chest strap.

Morning Report, which analyzes your sleep, recovery and Training Readiness, is here, along with Garmin's race widget, introduced last year, to help you plan and train for the specific races on your calendar. The Training Readiness feature will tell you how well recovered you are for your scheduled workout, based on HRV status, your sleep history, recovery time, acute load (previously called 7-day load) and stress history. (Training Readiness may be the most useful of the watch's numerous training metrics.)

It also offers wrist-based running power, if that interests you (i.e., no pod required—just be aware that running power is not standardized across brands; you can also disable it) and wrist-based running dynamics (which provides gait-analysis-type insights, such as vertical oscillation and ground contact time), plus phone-free music storage (including Spotify).

In case it's important to you: you can't get an ECG on the 265.

The 265 gets up to 15 days of battery life in smartwatch mode, or up to 24 hours in GPS mode. For those looking for a smaller watch, the Forerunner 265S has a 42 mm face. (And, oddly, it has slightly longer battery life than the bigger watch.) Charging is now via USB-C, and it charges in a little over an hour.

Polar
Ignite 3
43 mm

$480 Ⓓ

WHO IT'S FOR Casual runners and fitness enthusiasts
BATTERY LIFE 30 hours in GPS mode, five days in smartwatch mode

The new Polar Ignite 3 is an excellent tool to support the all-around fitness enthusiast, occasional runner or multisport athlete. It will track more than 150 different activities, as well as sleep, heart rate and HRV tracking and recovery insights in a watch with a bright, high-res AMOLED touchscreen display (with one button) and good battery life—up to 30 hours in GPS mode with full HR tracking, which is 10 hours longer than the previous version, or up to five days in watch mode.

The Nightly Recharge feature reflects data from HR, HRV and sleep tracking to help you know when your body is ready for your next workout. It also has running, walking and fitness performance tests, so you can observe your improvement over time. And it now has the Back to Start feature found in more expensive models, which allows you to retrace your steps to your starting point if you get lost.

Enhancements over the 2 include multiband GPS (which means it's more accurate than before), and the watch's high-speed CPU processes data twice as fast as the previous version, with seven times the memory of the 2.

This watch also has music controls, is designed with esthetics in mind and is super light (it weighs only 35 g). It looks so good, you'll never take it off.

Garmin
Forerunner 965
47 mm

$800

WHO IT'S FOR Serious road, trail and ultrarunners looking for sophisticated navigation features, great functionality and battery life
BATTERY LIFE 75 hours in GPS mode, 30 days in smartwatch mode

The 965 is an update to the 955 series, and an excellent training aid for the serious runner with a packed race calendar. It has the added benefit of the super-bright, always-on AMOLED touchscreen/5-button display (there are multiple brightness settings, so don't be concerned that it's too bright). Use the buttons or the touchscreen or a combination of the two—the only things you can't do with the touchscreen are start and stop an activity or hit the lap key. This is Garmin's largest watch, with a 1.4-inch display, available with a titanium bezel and three band colours. (People with smaller wrists might find it a bit big.)

The 965 has multiband GPS and does it all, from activity tracking (including switching between triathlon activities with one press, plus it's waterproof to 50 metres) to sleep and recovery insights to daily suggested workouts (based on your upcoming races), training readiness, HRV status, body battery energy monitoring, menstrual and pregnancy tracking, built-in full-colour maps for streets and trails (with routing and turn-by-turn navigation), customizable triathlon and multisport profiles, Climb Pro, Running Dynamics for form analysis, the Next Fork navigation feature, race widget, race predictor, pulse oximeter, incident detection, Garmin Pay, phone-free music storage, smart notifications, wrist-based running power and more. Updates to the software include training load ratio and chronic load, for those who can't get enough training insights. Really, there isn't much that this watch can't do for the serious runner who loves to pore over the numbers.

The 965 offers up to 31 hours of battery life in GPS mode or up to 23 days in smartwatch mode.

LIGHT
START
STOP
UP
DOWN
BACK
FORERUNNER
24 hr
25
VO2
52
1010
SAT 01
8:00
38
100%
GARMIN

ELEVATE YOUR
HEART RATE

CMH BUGABOOS | PHOTO BY LIFE OUTSIDE STUDIO

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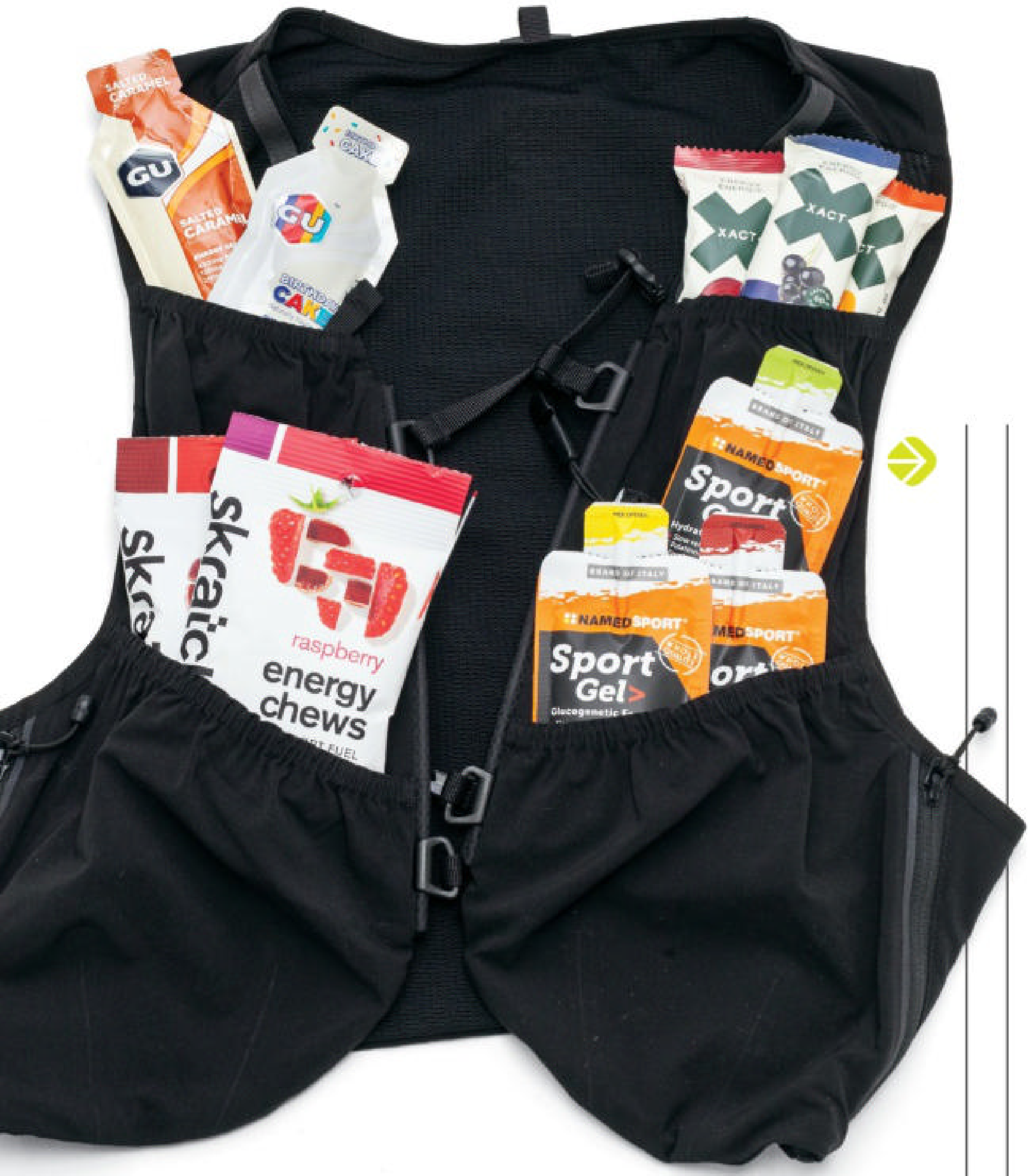

Nutrition for Runners

The choices in race fuel and recovery drinks can be overwhelming. Here are a few of our favourites

Race fuel

Many runners find gels too sweet and chews too chewy; for them, **Xact**'s compact **Energy fruit bars** are the perfect alternative. With a smooth, jelly-like centre, they come in multiple fruit flavours (as well as maple and beet), taste great and make an excellent marathon or half-marathon fuel. Take one just before the race and every 45 minutes. Each bar has 100 calories and 25 g of carbohydrates; the blackcurrant flavour contains 50 mg of caffeine (from guarana extract), and the beet flavour has added electrolytes. Bars are lactose-free, gluten-free and vegan. **BONUS:** Xact is a Canadian company. **$57 for a box of 24**

Total Energy Strong Gels by **NamedSport** make great marathon, half-marathon or ultra fuel and are easy to consume on-course. These lemon-flavoured gels contain 30 g of carbohydrate, plus caffeine and electrolytes. Both products are gluten-free, lactose-free and vegan-friendly. **Sport Gels are $2.25 each; Total Energy Sport Gels are $2.99 each**

Gu Energy gels deliver a burst of motivation when you need it most. Each gel contains 22 g of carbs (7 g from sugar) and 125 mg of sodium. Most flavours also contain 20 mg of caffeine. (Gu Roctane gels pack a bigger jolt, with 35 mg of caffeine.) **About $51 for a box of 24 gels, or $2.10 each**

Energy Chews Sport Fuel by **Skratch Labs**, which are gluten-free, dairy-free and vegan, will help get you to the finish line in one piece without bonking. The 50-g packets, which contain 19 g of carbs (13 g from sugar) are a little bulkier than a gel (you're supposed to consume one packet per hour), but could be a great alternative for folks who dislike gels. They come in five flavours; the blueberry and sour cherry flavours have 25 mg of caffeine. **$33 for a box of 10 packets or $3.29 per single serving**

Good news for Gu Energy fans

There's a new raspberry lemonade flavour, and it comes with a charitable benefit—10 per cent of proceeds from sales will be donated to the Running on Native Lands initiative by Virginia-based Rising Hearts. Gu Energy also makes drink tabs, energy chews and stroopwafels. (Gu Energy has a new gel-packet recycling program in partnership with TerraCycle.) **About $51 for a box of 24 gels, or $2.10 each**

PROKRUNCH
PROTEIN PROTÉINES
XACT
15g
Energybar
ENERGY SUPPLY
35g
wild berries
BRAND OF ITALY
ASPARTAME FREE
VEGETARIAN FRIENDLY

Post-long-run snack

For times you can't refuel right away after a race or a long run, the chocolate-coated **Protein wafers** (formerly called Prokrunch) by **Xact** make a satisfying and yummy post-run snack. Available in chocolate, vanilla and coconut, the bars contain 250 calories and 15 g of whey protein (a vegan version is also available). **$80 for a box of 24**

Energybars by **NamedSport** are a light, rice-krispie-style snack and make a tasty post-run pick-me-up. Available in banana, peach, strawberry and wild berries, they contain 28 g of carbohydrate and are lactose- and aspartame-free and vegetarian-friendly. **$30 for a box of 12**

Electrolytes

Isotonic Hydra Zero drink tabs by **NamedSport** have a light, refreshing taste and are suitable for both on-course hydration and post-race recovery. Available in quick-dissolving orange and lemon flavours, each tab contains vitamins B1, B2 and B6, plus magnesium, potassium, chlorine, calcium and sodium (but zero sugar—sweetened with sucralose). Suggested use is two tabs dissolved in 270 ml of water, or a little more than a cup. **$9 per tube of 20 tabs**

Xact Electrolytes sports hydration tabs keep you well hydrated on long, hot runs, when you're more at risk for dehydration. Available in plain, cherry, lemon and citrus bang (which contains 50 mg of caffeine from guarana extract). Suggested use: dissolve one tab in 500 ml (2 cups) of water; delivers 3 g of carbohydrate, 520 mg sodium, 25 mg magnesium, 100 g potassium, 6 mg iron, 25 mg vitamin C and only 1 g of sugar. Tabs are vegan, dairy-free and gluten-free. **$12.50 per tube of 10 tabs (or 3 tubes for $30)**

Skratch Labs Sports Hydration Drink Mix is made with real fruit and comes in six light-tasting flavours. Each serving yields electrolytes (sodium, magnesium, calcium and potassium) and carbs formulated in an ideal ratio of fructose to glucose for athletes—and the raspberry-limeade flavour also contains 50 mg of caffeine. Simpy dissolve a packet in 350 to 500 ml (1.5 to 2 cups) of water and drink when you're thirsty. This vegan-friendly product is available in three formats. **$2.50 per serving, $20 for a box of eight single-serving packets, or $30 for a 20-serving bag; lemon-lime flavour also available in 1.3-kg/60-serving bags for $75**

Skratch Labs Clear Hydration Drink Mix is for those seeking a less sweet alternative, and comes in two flavours (hint of orange and hint of lemon). With only 4 g of sugar per serving, you also get 270 mg of sodium to fend off muscle cramps. **$3.15 per serving or $25 for a box of eight single-serving packets or $30 for a 16-serving bag**

Isotonic Hydra Zero
BRAND OF ITALY
ZERO SUGAR
GLUTEN FREE
INSTANT HYDRATION
With Electrolytes and Vitamins
20 tablets
orange flavour
BEFORE DURING AFTER
INFORMED SPORT
BANNED SUBSTANCE TESTED

ELECTROLYTES
XACT
CAFFEINE 50 mg
CITRUS BANG
AGRUME BOOM
10
Hydration tablets
Comprimés d'hydratation

skratch
skratch LABS
skratch

HOW TO BUY

NamedSport
Available at some specialty running stores and online at *unoimports.com*

Gu Energy
Available at running specialty stores and online at *guenergy.com*

Skratch Labs
Available at most independent running, cycling and outdoor stores and all MEC stores

Xact Nutrition
Available at running specialty stores and online at *xactnutrition.com*

Matt Stetson

BackRoads Run Club

BackRoads Run Club

Since 2017, this club has been a magnet for London, Ont., runners of all abilities

BACKROADS RUN CLUB
LONDON, ONTARIO

Club Stats

MEMBERS 220
PROGRAMS Learn to run, 10K, half-marathon, marathon, race team
FEES Thursday night social runs are free; other programs range from $65 to $110
WEBSITE *backroadslondon.com/pages/run-club*
INSTAGRAM @backroadslondon

By Christine Dirks

In 2016, when Aaron Hendrikx, 29, was planning London, Ont.'s BackRoads Brews + Shoes (which opened the following year), he knew a run club would be an essential part of the business. "I was confident that the London and area market would support a specialty running store that had a focus on community and on running groups for people of varied abilities," says the soft-spoken Hendrikx, who is the sole owner.

The BackRoads Run Club offers programs for both experienced and novice runners. "The run club was an important part of the business model from the start," says Hendrikx. The club includes learn-to-run, 10K, half-marathon and marathon programs. There are currently 220 active members of the run club, and between the free Thursday evening social runs and the club's various training programs, there is something going on almost every day of the week.

BackRoads is evenly divided between retail and the taproom, which offers craft beer brewed from hops grown on Hendrikx's family farm west of London. The taproom has a full espresso-based coffee bar with kombucha on tap, as well as local cider and wine—perfect for post-run socializing.

"From the start, the goal was to create a social atmosphere and a community around the store, with staff who are focused on helping customers find the products and programs that are a good fit for their interests, needs and abilities," says Hendrikx.

Brian Murphy, an employee and leader of the BackRoads marathon program, loves how the buzz grows in the taproom as runners gather to chat about the upcoming run and regroup afterward to socialize and share stories, compare Strava uploads and interact over coffee or a pint. "It is such a welcoming, inclusive vibe," he says.

In 2022, Hendrikx launched the BackRoads race team with the goal of helping more runners pursue their running dreams. Members of the race team are a diverse group who run on both roads and trails. The team is increasingly active in local running events as well as events outside London.

"I believed that if I applied the dedication and hard work to the business that I did to my running, the business would succeed," notes Hendrikx. "I love the community-building and the positive impact the business has had on so many people. Maybe we'll see another BackRoads location one day." R

Christine Dirks, 72, is a writer and runner in London, Ont. At age 69, she completed a 50-mile event, describing it as "great fun."

BackRoads Race Team

Rob Breivik, Jacob Marsh

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Adel Ben-Harhara

Growing up in Ethiopia, Ben-Harhara was sometimes homeless—and shoeless. He was inspired by learning about the former world record holder, Adebe Bikila, who ran barefoot

By Lorna Stuber

MarathonFoto

TOP Adel Ben-Harhara at the 2022 New York City Marathon

Adel Ben-Harhara appreciates a decent pair of shoes.

"Growing up in Ethiopia, I was homeless for two years," he says. "I grew out of my clothes, so I ran around barefoot in shabby, dirty clothes. I bathed in the river probably once a year."

Now 61, Ben-Harhara was five when his father died. He then lived with an abusive uncle, who disappeared suddenly, three years later. He was rescued at age 10 by an aunt who heard that her nephew was living on the streets.

"It was the first time in five years that I had a real home with a real family," Ben-Harhara says. "The first thing my aunt did was buy me some new clothes and a pair of shoes. But I was under strict instructions to not wear my shoes when playing soccer with my friends." The shoes were only to be worn at school; in those days, they were a precious commodity.

"Before I was orphaned, I was taught to read and write Arabic, Amharic and English," he says. "When I was living on the streets, I made sure I went to school even for half a day, as I knew education was important."

Because he could read, Ben-Harhara became the source of information for his neighbours. "My uncle got the newspaper, but I was one of the few people in our community who could read it. Families would gather in the courtyard while I read the stories aloud. I felt important because I could do something that many adults couldn't do."

He remembers reading about the 1972 Summer Olympics: "The newspaper had articles about Abebe Bikila, the Ethiopian marathon runner who set the world record in the 1960 Olympics—barefoot! When I read that, I thought, maybe I need not be ashamed. After all, there is something good about going barefoot."

That homeless boy is now a professional. Ben-Harhara has spent the last 28 years in Calgary, working as a computer engineer, IT specialist and project manager. He completed his MBA while working full time and raising his two daughters. He's currently writing a three-volume memoir.

An outdoor enthusiast, Ben-Harhara hikes in the Rockies most weekends and has climbed Kilimanjaro. And like Bikila, he runs marathons.

"When I was 50, I started running as a form of therapy to come to terms with my difficult childhood," he says. "I've always enjoyed soccer, and thought running would be easy, but I had to learn how to pace myself. I also had to learn about proper clothing and footwear. When I arrived for my first running clinic, I was wearing a pair of shorts from the 1980s and running shoes from Walmart. I quickly learned that, like a carpenter, a runner needs the right tools for the job."

Adel's Go-Tos

Shoes

Adidas Adizero

Watch

Garmin Venu Sq

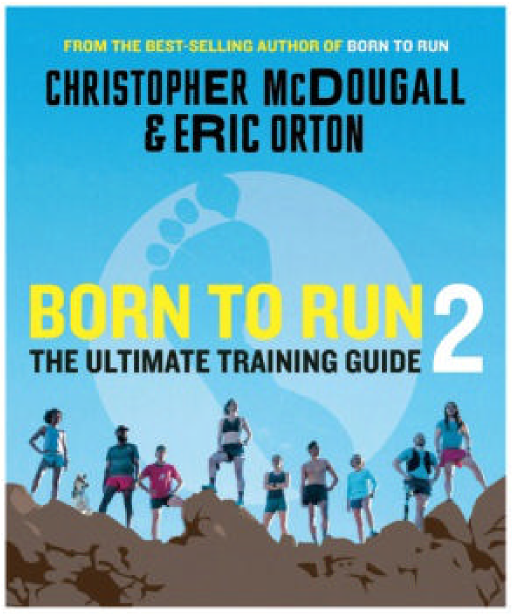
Nutrition

"I carry dates during a marathon, rather than energy drinks or gels"

Ben-Harhara has run 24 marathons, including Boston, Chicago, London and Berlin. "My goal was to run the six majors before I turned 60," he says. "It was only the pandemic that prevented me from doing that. I completed New York this past November and plan to do Tokyo in 2024."

When asked what motivates him to keep pushing through a marathon, Ben-Harhara jokes, "I imagine my ex-wife is chasing me. Or that my daughters are waiting at the finish line. The truth is, I think of Bikila breaking world records without wearing shoes. He's my inspiration." R

Lorna Stuber is a freelance editor, writer and ghostwriter living in Okotoks, Alta. She specializes in non-fiction and enjoys travel writing and memoir. For more information, visit lornastuber.com.


FROM THE BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF BORN TO RUN
CHRISTOPHER McDOUGALL
& ERIC ORTON
BORN TO RUN 2
THE ULTIMATE TRAINING GUIDE

Born To Run 2

The Ultimate Training Guide

By Christopher McDougall and Eric Orton
Penguin Random House, 2022

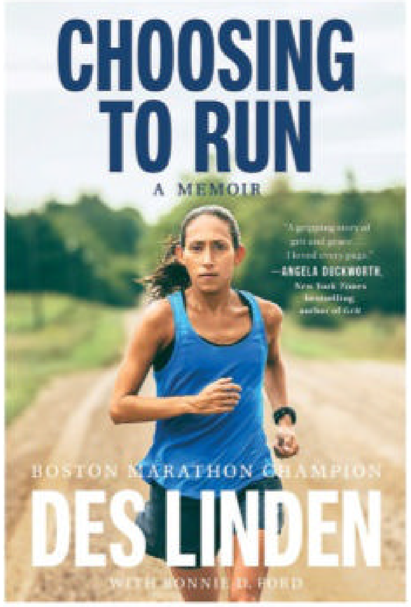
When Christopher McDougall's book *Born to Run* hit shelves in 2009, it sparked a minimalist running shoe revolution. The bestselling work, which chronicles the American journalist's journey to Mexico's Copper Canyons to learn the running secrets of the Indigenous Tarahumara people, argues that humans are born to run—and that cushioned, supportive shoes alter our natural gait and lead to injury.

I read *Born to Run* while the book was enjoying its run on the *New York Times* bestseller list and was persuaded to try minimalist running myself. After a few months in "barely there" shoes, my calves were so tight I could barely walk, let alone run. I switched back to cushioned shoes and haven't looked back.

Since the height of *Born to Run*'s popularity, the running shoe industry has moved so far from the minimalist movement that in 2020, World Athletics introduced rules to cap shoe midsole stack heights. Yet McDougall remains a committed advocate for minimalism. *Born to Run 2* isn't solely about shoes—it's a how-to book that lays out a 90-day "Run Free" program for runners of all abilities—but it champions minimalist running and recommends several "barefoot" models that are still on the market. McDougall and his co-author, coach Eric Orton, argue that "too many runners make the mistake of thinking that if cushioned shoes ruined their form, then minimalist shoes can fix it. But changing footwear changes nothing, as their strained calves and aching heels would later attest." The key, they and others in the book argue, is to perfect their running form—and *Born to Run 2* includes step-by-step instructions.

Do you need to be on the minimalist shoe bandwagon to enjoy *Born to Run 2*? No, but it would help. The book also explores ideas that transcend shoe preference, including the pros and cons of running with music and the benefits of sharing your running journey with others. I admit I glazed over some sections of the book, such as the collection of low-glycemic recipes, but, for the most part, I was drawn in by the storytelling. Throughout the book, McDougall and Orton share personal stories of runners that offer insight into the experience of running as members of marginalized communities.

Though *Born to Run 2* is a reference guide, it's best read front-to-back, as each lesson builds on the ones before and references characters who appeared in earlier chapters.—*Andrea Hill*



Choosing To Run

A Memoir

By Des Linden
Penguin Random House, 2023

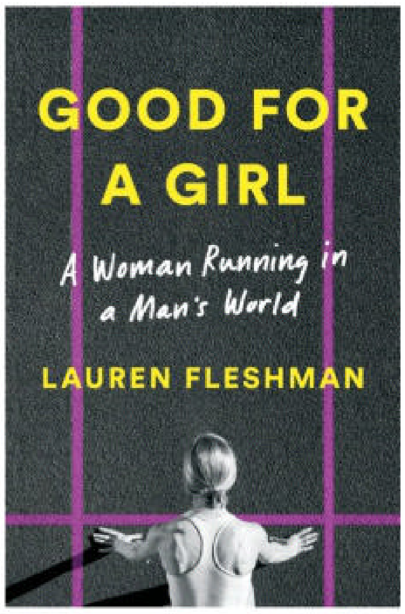
American distance runner Des Linden spent much of the 2018 Boston Marathon planning to drop out. In the unprecedented cold, wind and rain, it wasn't until close to the 30-km mark that she realized she was in contention for the podium, and vowed to make it to the finish.

Linden's victory that day—the first by an American woman since Lisa Rainsberger (née Larsen Weidenback) broke the tape in 1985—is all the more remarkable, given the health challenges she faced leading up to it. (She was diagnosed with and treated for severe hypothyroidism.) In her new memoir, *Choosing to Run*, Linden weaves the story of her remarkable victory in Boston with her journey from a child struggling with her father's expectations to an elite runner and two-time Olympian who always felt like an outsider.

A central theme of Linden's book is the relationships forged and tested in the high-stress world of pro running, and she doesn't pull any punches. Linden began her pro career with the Brooks-sponsored Hansons Original Distance Project, which targeted runners like her, "who came out of college with unfulfilled promise." The Hanson brothers acted in dual roles as coaches and business managers and, as Linden's success grew, she became uncomfortable with the dynamic. Her memoir details how she stood up to the brothers around their training and business decisions—and ultimately parted ways with the team amid increasingly difficult conversations.

Choosing to Run also explores Linden's mindset during two major shake-ups in the running industry: the quiet introduction of Nike's carbon-plated "super shoes" for select athletes and an investigation into doping violations at the Nike Oregon Project (the former elite training group run by Alberto Salazar). Linden talks about how watching Nike athletes succeed in this environment left her with a sense that her sport was "descending into disorienting chaos" and how, in the hours after finishing fourth at the 2017 Boston Marathon, she reflected that "it seemed easier to let go of ambition and stop caring."

But, of course, Linden did not let go. In fact, she overcame one of her biggest challenges to line up at Boston the following year in her own pair of Brooks carbon-plated shoes. Linden has always been open about the fact that she took a months-long break from running in 2017, but in *Choosing to Run* she candidly dives into the medical issues she faced during that time and how difficult it was to resume running at all, culminating in her inspiring win at Boston.—*Andrea Hill*



Good for a Girl

A Woman Running in a Man's World

By Lauren Fleshman
Penguin Press, 2023

Lauren Fleshman grew up believing she could do anything men could do. As she watched young female runners around her deal with disordered eating and injuries, she questioned their choices and felt confident she'd make better ones. She wanted to be the best, while staying healthy.

But during her years of high school, college and pro running, despite her best intentions, she had to contend with puberty, negative body image, disordered eating, irregular periods and, ultimately, a body that was breaking down.

"We fold and smash women and girls into a male-based infrastructure and then scratch our heads when the same friction points show up again and again," Fleshman writes. The realization made her angry—"angry that so many women and girls were blamed for not thriving in a system not truly built for them."

Good for a Girl is the story of Fleshman's life and impressive career—from NCAA champion to Nike pro and Olympic hopeful to, in more recent years, coach of Littlewing Athletics in Oregon and brand strategy advisor at the women's apparel brand Oiselle. It's also an honest and unflinching examination of the problems with women's sport.

Fleshman incorporates statistics about menstrual dysfunction, how puberty affects male and female athletes differently, the lack of female coaches in the U.S. and body image among female athletes—all to show that attempts to train and coach women like men is not a recipe for success. And that women deserve a different, better approach.

The book is part of her effort to fix the sport she loves; it's infuriating and sad, but also hopeful, and compulsively readable. Fleshman doesn't only identify what's wrong with the running world—she also lays out what needs to be done by coaches, schools, the NCAA and running brands to fix it. "True equality in sports, like any other industry, requires rebuilding the systems so there is an equal chance to thrive," she writes.

Good for a Girl is a must-read for every runner, no matter their gender.—*Rhiannon Russell* R

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Then and Now

Looking back on the running life

By Christine Dirks

LEFT AND BOTTOM
Christine Dirks, then

I kept seeing her. She was running. I was walking. I was working from home. Halfway through the day I would take a walk, and there she was. Seeing her reminded me of how I liked to run when I was young.

I wanted to reconnect with that feeling, so I changed my routine. I would walk for 10 minutes, then run for 10 minutes. It felt good. The more I ran, the more I liked it. Soon, I was running without a break. I didn't know how far I was running until my sister visited. She wanted to know, so she drove the route. She returned with a smile. "You're running 10K!" she said.

I kept running the route, and I looked forward to my daily run. I didn't think of running with others until I saw a poster for a clinic in the window of a running store. I walked into the store to enquire. The staff member said that if I joined the clinic, I would run with others at my pace.

I said I didn't know my pace. "You will," he said. Running with others was new, and I liked it a lot. Conversation was lively, and if the legs grew tired, there were encouraging words from others.

Bus trips for races were as close to my home in London, Ont., as Hamilton and as far as Montreal and Chicago. Energy was high. Conversation was punctuated by loud bursts of laughter. Once we were on the way, our coach, John Ferguson, would stand at the front of the bus. With microphone in hand, he would call each runner to the front, one at a time. With a smile, he would speak to each runner's distinct personality and achievements.

A bus full of runners anticipating a race has an energy all its own. We've run hundreds of miles together. We've trained hard in the cold, in the heat, in the rain and on lovely, warm days.

Each one of us is well trained and hopeful for a good outcome. We are all happy to be in the company of friends who love to run. Each of us is nearing the time when the training, nutrition and rest will be put to the test. I look back at the training runs, the races, the bus trips and the parties with affection. Friendships were formed that carry on today.

I'm now 72. I've run more than 150 races, from one mile to 50 miles. My days of setting a personal best are behind me, and that's OK. When the group gathers for training runs, I'm happy to see familiar faces and run as best I can. Being in the company of friends who "get" running is good. It's *very* good. The best part of running has been, and remains, the friendships with other runners and the advice from coach John Ferguson.

I'm still with the group. Still running. And still enjoying it.

Christine Dirks is a writer and runner in London, Ont., who prefers to run without music. Last year she completed a 50-mile event, describing it as "great fun."

Courtesy Christine Dirks

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